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Lollardy and the Reformation in England

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Lollardy and the Reformation in England

An Historical Survey

BY

JAMES GAIRDNER, C.B.

HON. LL.D. EDIN.

VOL. I

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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PREFACE

It is now some years since I was asked by my friend Dr. Hunt, now President of the Royal Historical Society, on behalf of himself and the late Dean Stephens of Winchester, to contribute a volume to the English Church History planned by them, dealing with the first half of the sixteenth century down to the death of Mary. Interesting as the task assigned to me was, I confess I shrank from it at first, feeling that anything like adequate treatment of it, in the light of new materials and evidences better arranged than they had been, made demands upon my leisure which it was doubtful whether I had a right to concede while still engaged in other work, which I could not delay or set aside. Moreover, I knew too well not only that it was no holiday task, though it could perhaps be pursued at intervals, but that the result would certainly be to present many things in a very different light from that in which they had been hitherto regarded. Nor was it, perhaps, altogether encouraging that the plan of publication hardly admitted of elaborate justification of these views, or even of specific citation of authorities for separate statements. Yet I was anxious to say, within the

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limits allotted to me, and without taxing too greatly the patience of my editors and publishers, what I believed to be the truth about this very important period of Church History; and how far my judgment was to be trusted must, of course, be a question for readers and critics who were to follow me.

On the whole, the reception my volume met with was exceedingly favourable — far more so, I must confess, than I had expected; and such criticism as I have seen was not ungenerous. But I could not help feeling, after a time, that a more complete elucidation of various subjects was desirable; and that, though a full history of the English Reformation may not be a work which such a one as I can hope to achieve—even if advancing years did not remind me of the necessary limitation of my powers,—it was desirable to illustrate from sources more familiar, I think, to me than to most people, a number of influences, not confined, by any means, to a period of fifty years, but culminating, from various causes, in a great political and religious crisis in the sixteenth century, which has determined the relations of Church and State and placed the religious thought of the world under new conditions from that time even to the present day.

My present work, therefore, although partly going over the same ground as its predecessor, has a wider scope and a materially different aim. The volume which I contributed to Dean Stephen's Church History aimed only at setting forth the true story of

the Church of England from the beginning of the sixteenth century to the death of Queen Mary. The previous and the subsequent history were handed over to others, who treated their periods, as I did mine, without more than necessary reference to earlier causation or subsequent development. But the Reformation, as a study by itself, forbids us to confine our view even to one single century. We must look back for the predisposing causes; we must look forward to the subsequent developments; and we must endeavour to realise from both causes and developments the unity of the whole subject, and the position at which we have arrived in our own day as a true and natural consequence of all that has gone before.

It is not a mere study of events that will suffice for this. In the religious history of a nation one might almost treat events, even of a religious character, as matters of subordinate interest. Great events, indeed, must be noted, not only as special crises due to the development of new forces, but as conditions laid down for future progress; and it has been my main purpose to inquire how far they either controlled or were controlled by the religious feeling of the nation. In this attempt I think I may be pardoned for passing over much that is of considerable interest, not only in political but even in ecclesiastical history. The ancestry and growth of ideas that have revolutionised the world are far more important matters than the reception of a legate or the proclamation of a latter-day crusade.

Moreover, I have not bound myself to the form of a progressive historical narrative. I have called the work an historical survey, not a history; for I have felt it necessary at times to glance backwards and forwards, and even to repeat myself to some extent. Whether I could have got all I had to say otherwise into a more artistic form, I am not altogether sure. The significance of great movements seems to require a good deal of restatement to do it justice; and a condensed general survey ought, I think, to assist the understanding of a detailed account. Yet perhaps the conditions under which I have been compelled to work are answerable to some extent for repetitions which might have been avoided.

I have, however, followed historical order in the main. The connection of Lollardy and the Reformation in England is the subject of these two volumes, and it is a subject by no means exhausted when we come to the death of Henry VIII., at which the second volume ends. If strength be still vouchsafed to me for so great an undertaking I have a great desire to carry the work on to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the political basis of a national religion was most firmly established. The work was done, indeed, in a manner by no means lovely; but there is no excuse for not looking facts in the face and considering whither they carry us. The philosophy of the present age is largely against the recognition of any national religion whatever; but Christianity is still with us, to be acknowledged or

disowned in some form or other, at their peril, by individuals, parties, and nations. So I sincerely trust that a national Christianity will not only survive among us, but be more generally regarded than it has been.

I have but one word to add, and that is a word of gratitude to my friend Dr. Hunt, who has perused most of these sheets in passing through the press, and has given me the benefit of many criticisms and suggestions. Of course he is not responsible for anything that I have said, but in various ways his observations have been very helpful.

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ERRATA

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Page 24, in last footnote insert "iii." after "Wilkins."
,, 39, line 9, insert "the" before "extracts."
,, 48, line 21, delete "to constitute."
,, 63, footnote 2, for "knyzttiis" read "knyzttis."
,, 108, line 5 from bottom of text, for "passage" read "manuscript."
,, 121, line 20, for "thousands of" read "many of the."
,, 123, line 21, for "ancient" read "general."
,, 152, line 7 from bottom, after "declined" insert "thus." *Note.*—The technical sense in which the word "suspectus" was used in these examinations is not familiar to us. Mungyn apparently means to say that no grounds of suspicion had been alleged against him sufficient to justify a prosecution. Bearing this in mind, the first four lines at the beginning of next page must be altered as follows:—
,, 153, lines 1 to 4 should be—"was brought in once more. Being asked if even yet he would abjure, he answered point-blank that he was not suspected of any error or heresy, and therefore, as a man so suspected, he said expressly that he would never abjure while he lived." The next sentence should be cancelled.
,, 176, line 6, for "capricious" read "testy," and insert a comma after "*capitosus.*" [The writer apparently intended to explain *capitosus* by adding "scilicet testie," the last word being misread by the Bohemian scribe as *testis.*]
,, 178, line 3, "declare" should be printed with inverted commas to show that it represents the technical Latin *declarare*, meaning "to explain."
,, 270, lines 7, 6 from the bottom, for "even before receiving" read "shortly before, on receiving."
,, 271-2. Leaf to be cancelled.
,, 273, line 14, for "was able" read "did his best."
,, 349, line 4, after "Mr. Foxe" insert a comma before the line.
,, 357, line 15, after "Satan" delete the comma.
,, 365, line 9, after "bias" insert a comma.
,, 370, line 32, for "positive mistranslation" read "somewhat doubtful translation."
,, 371, line 3, for "plainly" read "probably."
,, 371, footnote 1, strike out the last clause, "but there cannot," etc.
,, 425, line 16, delete "to."
,, 463, note 1, for "*Ecclesiastica*" read "*Ecclesiasticæ.*"
,, 571-2. Leaf to be cancelled.

BOOK I

THE LOLLARDS

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY LOLLARDS

It is rightly felt that a great movement in history which has left permanent, widespread, and far-reaching consequences could not have been entirely due to the persons or the circumstances of the particular age which produced it. Predisposing causes there must have been, even far back in the past; and there certainly were such in the English Reformation. Yet that movement itself unquestionably originated only in the sixteenth century. Not till then was there a positive separation from Rome and a revision of Church doctrine by an isolated national Church. Look at them with what eyes we may, such things undoubtedly mark a new era in Christianity; and with whatever condemnation we may think fit to censure particular agents, the religious revolution itself, it cannot be contested, was a historical fact of the very highest magnitude. As to the predisposing causes, they afford matter for discussion and verification.

What led to the English Reformation?

One whom we might well take as a guide considers the Reformation as "a great national revolution which found expression in the resolute assertion on the part of England of its national independence." These are the words of the late Bishop Creighton, who further tells us in the same page[1] that "there never was a time in England when the papal

[1] *Historical Lectures and Addresses*, p. 150.

Was it a national revolution?

authority was not resented, and really the final act of the repudiation of that authority followed quite naturally as the result of a long series of similar acts which had taken place from the earliest times." I am sorry to differ from so able, conscientious, and learned an historian, and my difficulty in contradicting him is increased by the consciousness that in these passages he expresses, not his own opinion merely, but one to which Protestant writers have been generally predisposed. But can such statements be justified? Was there anything like a general dislike of the Roman jurisdiction in Church matters before Roman jurisdiction was abolished by Parliament to please Henry VIII.? Or did the nation before that day believe that it would be more independent if the Pope's jurisdiction were replaced by that of the king? I fail, I must say, to see any evidence of such a feeling in the copious correspondence of the twenty years preceding. I fail to find it even in the prosecutions of heretics and the articles charged against them—from which, though a certain number may contain denunciations of the Pope as Antichrist, it would be difficult to infer anything like a general desire for the abolition of his authority in England. Moreover, if any such general sentiment existed I cannot, for my part, understand why there never was an attempt to throw off papal jurisdiction before the days of Henry VIII. A nation may, no doubt, find it hard to release itself from the grip of a domestic tyrant or of a foreign conqueror. But a spiritual power, as such, can only rule by the willing obedience of its subjects—unless, indeed, the temporal ruler find it his policy to strengthen spiritual jurisdiction by coercive laws. But in that case, if his policy do not prove altogether mistaken, the temporal ruler must for his part rely for support on a spiritual authority generally recognised and acquiesced in by his subjects.

That Rome exercised her spiritual power by the willing obedience of Englishmen in general, and that they regarded it as a really wholesome power, even for the control it exercised over secular tyranny, is a fact which it requires no very intimate knowledge of early English literature to bring home to us. Who was "the holy blissful martyr" whom Chaucer's pilgrims went to seek at Canterbury? One who had resisted his sovereign in the attempt to interfere with the claims of the papal Church. For that cause, and for no other, he had died; and for that cause, and no other, pilgrims who went to visit his tomb regarded him as a saint. It was only after an able and despotic king had proved himself stronger than the spiritual power of Rome that the people of England were divorced from their Roman allegiance; and there is abundant evidence that they were divorced from it at first against their will.

What, then, was the true nature of that struggle between papal and secular authority which Bishop Creighton would have us regard as a struggle for national independence? We shall see some other instances of it as we go on. But we may say simply, in a general way, that it was essentially the same as it was in the days of Becket. It was a contest, not of the English people, but of the King and his Government, with Rome. And it was not confined to England; for the very same conflict appears in the history of other nations. The only difference is that while the Pope exercised a spiritual supremacy in all kingdoms, his claims have not been admitted in England now for nearly four centuries. In her own spiritual sphere men acknowledged the authority of the Church at large. She had her own system of law, which all were bound to respect; and her clergy, as spiritual persons, claimed exemption from secular jurisdiction. They could not even be punished for crime against the laws of the land until

State of the Pre-Reformation Church.

they had first been degraded and put in the position of mere laymen. In short, there were two systems of law within the kingdom, canon and civil law. But canon law declared only what was supposed to be right in the abstract. It had in itself no coercive power, except the powers of appointing penance, excommunicating offenders, and depriving men of certain offices. The King's courts alone could deal with landed property, arrest and imprison for civil crimes, or pass sentence of death. But a certain power of arrest came to be allowed to bishops for the prevention of heretical disturbance, as we shall see by and by. The two systems, indeed, could only work together on some general understanding, and there was friction between them at times; but the limits of each could generally be decided by the King's courts, or, in the last resort, by the King himself, though he, for his part, always professed to be, like any other layman, an obedient son of Holy Church. If, on the contrary, he was very perverse, it was in the power of the Pope to excommunicate him, and even to assign his kingdom to another, as in the case of King John; for the spiritual power was theoretically above all. Few kings, however, cared to push matters to an extreme, and, as regards national feeling, the people evidently regarded the cause of the Church as the cause of liberty. That their freedom suffered grievously by the abolition of papal jurisdiction under Henry VIII. there can be no manner of doubt.

Not that the jurisdiction of the Church was popular among all classes of the community; for no jurisdiction ever is so. Laws of all kinds press more or less heavily on particular interests, and, quite apart from offenders against morals or Church doctrine, there were naturally some who disliked being called on even to pay tithes. There were also various kinds of Church dues, recoverable in the spiritual courts, which were unpopular among

the mercantile communities in the large towns. The Church, moreover, offered in various places the privilege of sanctuary to debtors, and even to criminals; and the immunity from civil jurisdiction, called "benefit of clergy," was not only extended to all the minor orders and officers of the Church, but ultimately to all who were able to read. Exemptions of persons and places from the ordinary law of the land, however careful may have been the discipline of bishops and abbots, could hardly have been productive of good results, and the termination of all possibility of conflict between two different systems of law was, no doubt, a desirable thing in itself. But the means by which this was brought about were beyond measure tyrannical; and the nation at large assuredly did not estimate independence of Rome as a very precious boon.

It may, however, be said that the political aspect of the Reformation as a revolt against Roman jurisdiction, whether on the part of the King or of the people, is not its only or its most essential aspect; and there is some truth in the objection. For the Reformation, of course, carried with it a considerable amount of doctrinal change, and it may fairly be asked if doctrinal change was not a cause rather than a consequence of the movement. If it was a cause, then the Reformation must be regarded mainly as a theological revolution, the sources of which are to be traced in earlier times, and our first study should be to explore those earlier influences which first created dissatisfaction with the authoritative teaching of the Church. Whence did those influences come?

The popular theory is that they may be traced back a full century or more to the teaching of Wycliffe and that of the Lollards who followed him. This theory is certainly plausible. But though it is undoubtedly true that modern Protestants find much in Wycliffe's teaching with which they can very well

sympathise, they might certainly find much else with which they could not. And, apart from the value of his theological views, however we may regard them, a more vital question comes up for consideration, On what authority did he rest them? This brings us once more to the question of jurisdiction; for, of course, any resolute attempt to change the fixed theology of a Church entrenched in such a strong position as we have just described could only hope for success by appealing to an authority presumably stronger than that which it sought to set aside. It may be doubted, however, whether Wycliffe aimed thus to alter the very basis of things. He sought rather to obtain recognition within the Church for principles which he considered not only consistent with her teaching, but really involved in it; and if he was not quite submissive to certain papal bulls and denunciations, we may presume that he regarded the end of the controversy as still far off, and conceived that after a full hearing he should be able to justify himself. Nor have we a right to suppose that, if he had failed to do this, he would not ultimately have submitted.

Weakness of papal authority in Wycliffe's day.

That he paid less respect to papal authority than the many before his time and after is undoubtedly true. But papal authority in his time was exceptionally weak, and the way had been paved for his philosophy, not only by the course of events, but by thinkers of an earlier period. At the beginning of the century the poet Dante in Italy (no less a scholastic philosopher than a poet) had expressed a theory which doubtless was in the minds of many. There were two supreme authorities in Christendom to whom all Christians were alike subject — the Emperor in temporal things, and the Pope in spiritual. Their rule was co-extensive, but differed in character. In matters of faith the Emperor was the Pope's subject; in secular matters the Pope

was the Emperor's. This was opposed to the older teaching of the schools, according to which the Emperor himself derived his authority from the Pope by virtue of his consecration. And such teaching had been acknowledged by emperors themselves, as when the fiery Frederic Barbarossa held the stirrup of Pope Alexander III. For the old theory was that spiritual power was to temporal as sunlight to moonlight. Even ordinary priesthood had in it something more exalted than kingly authority itself, and demanded special respect from the secular power. This view had really something to say for itself, namely, that it was not only received, but to a large extent acted upon. Dante's view, on the contrary, was merely a philosophic or poetic dream. The Holy Roman Empire, in the first place—fancifully regarded as a continuation of that of Augustus —was a perfect unreality, and only had a semblance of reality in Dante's day, when the victorious Henry VII. made his way into Italy and was crowned at Rome. The Papacy, on the other hand, seemed half to have forfeited its claims on Christendom by retreating to Avignon under the wing of France. Pope Boniface VIII. had overdone the papal pretensions in his struggle with Philip the Fair, and this was the result. Seven popes, all of them French by birth, followed each other at Avignon for a space of about seventy years, and the feeling for papal authority suffered considerably. John XXII. may have meant well; but in his struggle with Lewis of Bavaria, Henry VII.'s successor in the Empire, the latter had the sympathy of the great philosopher Marsiglio of Padua, and of "the Invincible Doctor," William of Ockham, not less famous in the schools of Paris than in those of his own country at Oxford. In 1338 the princes of Germany declared the Empire independent of the Pope, and a German Empire it virtually remained from that time till its extinction,

with the most shadowy claims on Christendom at large. It was for the Papacy now to recover itself.

In 1377 Pope Gregory XI. brought the papal See back from Avignon to Rome, and there was hope for one brief moment of better guidance for the Christian world. But when he died next year and was succeeded by Urban VI., the French party among the cardinals set up an anti-pope, and began the Great Schism which was scarcely extinguished even forty years later.

Wycliffe's activity began during the Avignon period, some years before the schism, and he died six years after it broke out. The social, the political, and the spiritual condition of the world were all alike bad. The powers of heaven were shaken and those of earth as well. The shameful trafficking in benefices at "the sinful city of Avignon" had aroused the indignation of "the Good Parliament" at the end of Edward III.'s reign; and when, some years earlier, Urban V. had demanded of the King of England arrears of the tribute conceded to the Papacy by King John, Wycliffe had taken a leading part in the schools, if not in the council chamber, in repudiating the unwarrantable claim. But while the things of the Church were thus mixed with degrading things of earth, the social life of nations had been upset by other causes. The world had not yet recovered from the fearful depopulation caused by the Great Pestilence and the social results which followed it. The servile classes, whose labour had become more valuable from the thinning out of the population, were becoming dangerous to their superiors, who, blind to the necessities of the time, strove to bind them to old conditions. Wat Tyler's rebellion—the natural consequence of this—filled the upper classes with dismay, and John Ball (Wycliffe's forerunner, as some called him, though eighteen of Wycliffe's principles had been denounced by papal bull four years before),

Exceptional times.

alike by his preaching and by his messages, was stirring up all over the country an agitation against serfdom. That was the climax in which civil government was paralysed and lost its footing, rocking to and fro in cabals and parties for a whole generation after. There was no security anywhere for peace and order, either in Church or State.

Nor did scholars and philosophers help much. Wycliffe had been looking long before for firm ground in his celebrated doctrine that dominion is founded in grace, a truth that, imperfectly apprehended, probably added to the general confusion. This doctrine, as set forth by him, implied that there was no real dominion, no real authority, and no real ownership of property without the grace of God. A man in mortal sin had no right to anything at all, but a man in a state of grace really possessed all things. Nay more, among Christians there ought to be a community of goods. As to the clergy having property of their own, it was a gross abuse. They ought to live on alms freely given. Tithes were really of such a nature, and they ought to be withheld from a clergyman who did not do his duty. The withdrawal of tithes, he said, would be a far better punishment for a sinful priest than getting him fined by his archdeacon or his bishop. And he warned the laity that they neither atoned for nor extenuated their own sins by endowing churches, but made themselves partakers of the sins of the clergy as well. The laity had serious responsibilities no less than the clergy, and the laity should be instructed in religion out of the Bible itself translated into their own English speech. The Bible was the source of all law, divine and human, and kings ought to study it in order to govern rightly. The great duty of the priesthood was preaching and expounding the Word, a really more important duty, in his eyes, than even administering the sacraments. But the clergy were

Wycliffe's philosophy.

not the Church. The true Church, in Wycliffe's opinion, was the whole community of those persons, whether clergymen or laymen, who were ultimately to be saved, and these men were predestined. The Pope himself, if not predestined, was not a member of the Church, and the Pope himself could not be sure of his own salvation. When the Schism broke out threatening Christendom with bloodshed, Wycliffe called both Popes monsters, neither of whom knew that he was a member of the Church at all.[1] A Pope was only to be obeyed when his commands were in harmony with Scripture. Every layman was bound to believe that he had Christ himself for priest, rector, bishop, and pope as well. Finally, a king was the highest of all earthly authorities, and had a perfect right to take away the temporal endowments of the Church when he thought fit.

Except in its bearing on the duties of the laity, teaching like this was scholastic rather than practical, and was accompanied to some extent by safeguards which none but thoughtful scholars could be expected fully to appreciate. It was clearly dangerous to an existing system, and could not maintain itself as a school of thought. Wycliffe's chief bequest to posterity was his English Bible, and the great idea that the laity too might quench their spiritual thirst directly from that well of Life. In the realm of mere theology he was less an innovator than we are apt to suppose. He believed in purgatory, and it was only in his later years that he called in question the doctrine of transubstantiation. He had very little thought of justification by faith. His mode of reforming the Church was not consistent with practical politics, and the Church found her own way out of that virtual anarchy which had suggested such drastic remedies. In doing so, of course, she denounced as a heretic the man whose ideas had once been

[1] See *Trialogi Supp.* (ed. Lechler), 425.

so powerful; and though Wycliffe was allowed to die in his bed, his body was forty years later exhumed and burnt under a decree of the Council of Constance.

It was really not the theological doctrines half so much as the external polity of the Church that Wycliffe called in question. He denounced the political pretensions of the Papacy in a way that revived the memory of Marsiglio of Padua, the opponent of John XXII. His defiance of papal bulls led to a breach between him and the different orders of friars, whose mode of life he found to be without scriptural warrant. The friars, whose immunities derived from Rome had enabled them to cultivate at ease philosophy, science, and theology to an extent of which the bishops were generally suspicious, now leagued with the bishops against him, and the bishops were glad of their aid. Herod and Pilate, as Wycliffe himself said about the matter, had become friends.[1] As an independent divine he had views of his own. Favoured by the protection of John of Gaunt and of other influential persons, who at least stood neutral and wished to see fair play, he drew after him a considerable body of followers; and the well-known weaknesses and irregularities of his opponents the friars[2] no doubt served to make his preaching all the more popular. Ere long it was estimated that full half the population had become his followers. They were so bold as to denounce the adherents of old Church traditions as impious, wicked, and perverse, and so strong had they become with powerful patronage that numbers actually accepted their teaching from fear. They created division among families, setting up father against son, and son against father, servants against masters, and, generally speaking,

His attack mainly on the external polity of the Church.

Number of his followers.

[1] Shirley's *Fascic. Zizan.* (Rolls Ser.), p. 284.

[2] See the popular poems against them in Brewer's *Monumenta Franciscana* pp. 591-608.

neighbours against neighbours. Such, at least, was the accusation against them.[1]

Now this certainly implies a state of matters which could not, in its nature, have been lasting. These sharp social divisions no doubt continued for a generation; but we find no marked evidence of their existence at the eve of the Reformation in the beginning of the sixteenth century. It may be, of course, that some Wycliffite leaven had by that time penetrated the whole community more or less, and influences perhaps there were of which this might possibly be said. But in that case they were unrecognised influences, for the name of Wycliffe was more distinctly branded as that of a heretic from about thirty years after his death than it had ever been when he was alive; and Wycliffite teaching continued to be denounced and prosecuted persistently till the Reformation. Instead of half the population being Wycliffite in the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign, cases of heresy were at that time comparatively rare, and such heretics as there were met with very little sympathy from men of good education or of any social standing.

I will not attempt to discuss the principles of Wycliffe more minutely at present; they are too scholastic for the general reader, and we shall see enough by and by of the doctrinal legacy he left to later ages. Here it may suffice to say that he himself, quite aware of the dangerous tendency of some of his principles taken by themselves, had supplied antidotes which led occasionally to other paradoxes. The wicked man, no doubt, according to his view, had no real ownership of property; but still the wicked owner must be left in possession. The bad master, too, must be obeyed; servants must remain in bondage, even to heathen lords; "God," as he strangely put it, "ought to obey the devil." But the communistic theory naturally took hold of many to whom the

[1] *Chronicle of Henry Knighton* (Rolls Ser.), ii. 184-7.

antidote was unacceptable; and if Wycliffe himself was far from seeking the subversion of society, he and his followers were accused of telling subjects to rule their rulers, bondsmen to throw off the yoke of masters, and laymen to usurp the proper functions of the clergy. For he certainly considered, as the reader has already seen, that the laity should keep the clergy in order, rather than the clergy the laity; that the people should withhold tithes from bad priests, and despise their excommunications; that every layman, indeed, was a priest, and that the Church should be controlled in its highest spiritual functions, the chief duty of the clergy being to preach the Word. Moreover, that kings ought to study the Bible as the sufficient source of all principles of government, and should take away the endowments of the Church as a positive source of evil.

All this was a kind of teaching not much calculated to commend itself, under ordinary circumstances, either to devout Christians or to mere men of the world. But towards the end of the fourteenth century many forces were tending to revolution; and, though there is no reason for impeaching either the sincerity or the consistency of Wycliffe's teaching, it would seem that after the great explosion of 1381 he was more anxious about the antidotes to communism than about the propagation of principles which seemed to favour it.[1] Other preachers had been setting forth dangerous doctrine before the insurrection broke out. The priest John Ball, who had been proclaiming the natural equality of men as being all descended from Adam and Eve, was apparently author of many of the rhyming ditties distributed over the country in the names of Jack Mylner, Jack Carter, Jack Trewman, and so forth; in one of which he even spoke in his own name:— John Ball.

[1] See Trevelyan's *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, pp. 199 *sq.*

"John Ball greeteth you well
And doth you to understand he hath rungen your bell."

He rang it to some purpose, and paid the natural penalty in the end; for however sincere he too may have been in wishing "right" to go "before might" and "skill before will," the movement which followed —so well known as the rebellion of Wat Tyler—was the most appalling thing that ever took place in England; and the frightened upper classes, when the disorder was at length subdued, were by no means anxious to mitigate the severity of justice on those who had brought it about. For twenty years, according to the monk of St. Albans, John Ball had been up and down the country preaching the things that he knew pleased the vulgar—that tithes should not be given except by men who were richer than the rector or vicar himself; that both tithes and other offerings should be withdrawn when the parishioner led a better life than his clergyman, and that no one was fit for the kingdom of God unless he was born in matrimony. He continually slandered both ecclesiastical persons and secular lords. He disregarded excommunication, and, being imprisoned, boasted that he would be delivered by twenty thousand friends; which, indeed, proved true in the insurrection, when the mob broke open all the gaols. Then in his famous sermon at Blackheath about Adam and Eve he had declared servitude a thing displeasing to God, and that to shake it off men only required courageous hearts; they should kill first all the chief lords of the kingdom, then all the lawyers, justices, and grand jurymen (*juratores patriæ*), and finally remove from their land any one who in future proved hurtful to the commonalty.[1]

Such was the charge against him; and, even if we suspect exaggeration, we are in no position to judge

[1] Walsingham, ii. 32, 33. Comp. *Fascic. Zizan.*, 273.

of its fairness now. His doctrines about tithes evidently harmonised a good deal with Wycliffe's own subsequent teaching, and there was some justice in the feeling that tithes (as matters then stood) were of the nature of voluntary alms, and should not be considered positive dues that could be exacted under pain of excommunication. Of many a village priest, no doubt, it might be said, as well as of Chaucer's poor parson—

> "Ful loth were him to cursè for his tythes;"

and though "cursing," or excommunication, was the only process by which those tithes could be levied if they were wilfully withheld by those quite able to pay, it did not tend to promote good feeling when incumbents would not rather forbear their dues than insist upon them, perhaps vexatiously, as positive legal rights. As for the strange doctrine that no one was fit for the kingdom of God who was not born in matrimony, one might perhaps suspect some error in the report; but it is certain that there were some after his day who said the same thing, however they might explain it. As to the tenor of his sermon at Blackheath, whatever he may have actually said, it is impossible not to believe that he was very largely responsible for the excesses of the mob.[1]

Wycliffe was wholly free from any such responsibility. He sympathised as much as Ball did with the oppressed bondmen and poor; but he admitted that the mob had shown themselves lawless. Even after the insurrection, however, he considered that the sufferings of the clergy had been brought on them by their own sins. He said, indeed, that it would have been far better for temporal lords to take away the goods of the Church than that the country

[1] In Shirley's *Fascic. Zizan.*, 273, it is specifically stated that he incited the mob to kill Archbishop Sudbury. The testimony may be biassed; but Archbishop Sudbury was killed by the mob, and Ball was with the mob.

people should kill a delinquent archbishop. If the endowed clergy had given up their temporal possessions to the King to pay the tax the insurrection would not have taken place. Indeed, he looked at that movement as only the beginning of evils, and considered it was high time, even after it abated, for the clergy to restore what they called the patrimony of the Church to secular princes to avert like woes in future.[1]

Wycliffe and Parliament.

Next year (1382) he laid before the Lords in Parliament, when they met in May, seven propositions much in accordance with these views.[2] He probably felt called on to define his principles clearly; for he had some time before sent out emissaries to preach them in different parts of the country, and there was no small stir in consequence. One William Swynderby, among others, had maintained fourteen of his conclusions in a sermon on Palm Sunday at Leicester;[3] and that there was a great deal of mischief brewing elsewhere we shall see pretty plain evidence by and by. Wycliffe, for his part, wanted his principles approved by Parliament, and for that reason he addressed himself to the Lords. Of the Commons he was tolerably sure if only he could get the Upper House to approve, for he had many sympathisers among the knights of the shires. But the Commons were not indeed the ruling body in that day. They could only present petitions to the throne, of which the Lords were judges; and whether these petitions were agreed to or rejected, or one-half accepted and the other half negatived, or an answer were returned that ordinary law was sufficient to meet the evils complained of, the Commons must accept the result. Wycliffe's fifth proposition, doubtless, would have commended itself to many of the Lower House: —"That the commonalty of the kingdom should not

[1] Wyclif *de Blasphemia*, 190-91.
[2] Walsingham, ii. 51, 52.
[3] *Ibid.*, 53.

be burdened with unusual taxes until the whole patrimony with which the clergy was endowed should be exhausted." But such a policy as this could scarcely commend itself to the bishops and abbots who sat in the House of Lords; and the danger of it was apparent even to many of the knights of shires. So, being well aware how easily a new insurrection might be stirred up, even the knights in Parliament pressed upon Archbishop Courtenay, the successor of the murdered Sudbury, the necessity of a distinct official declaration on the subject of heresy.[1]

The Archbishop, accordingly, held a council—long afterwards remembered as "the Council of the Earthquake," from an occurrence that disturbed its first sitting—during that same month of May,[2] and twenty-four of Wycliffe's conclusions were condemned as heretical or erroneous.[3] And Parliament, to which Wycliffe had appealed, followed up the work of Convocation by action of its own. An Act was passed,[4] at the request, no doubt, of the bishops, ordaining that commissions should be issued to arrest preachers who went about from county to county and from town to town without licence of their ordinaries, preaching daily, "not only in churches and churchyards, but also in markets, fairs, and other open places" where there were great congregations of people, sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, "to the great emblemishing of the Christian faith and destruction of the laws and estate of Holy Church, to the great peril of the souls of the people and of all the realm." So it had been proved, the Act stated, before the clergy in synod. It was impossible for the bishops to control such men, for they

Statute to arrest vagrant preachers.

[1] Shirley's *Fascic. Zizan.*, 272.

[2] St. Dunstan's Day, May 19, is given by Netter as the date on which it met, but it was really on the 21st. See Matthew's *Engl. Works of Wycliffe*, Introd., p. xxvi. *note.*

[3] Shirley's *Fascic. Zizan.*, 275-91.

[4] Statute the second of 5 Ric. II. cap. 5.

despised their authority, collected mobs, and threatened violence, besides having always the resource of escaping from one diocese into another, where the summons of the bishop could not reach them. But this statute would put some check upon vagrant and unauthorised preaching by making every such preacher responsible to the ordinary of the place. And there is no doubt that it effected something; for commissions in pursuance of it were issued under the Great Seal on the 26th June following,[1] and there is evidence of action having been taken under them at various times afterwards.

And yet there is a singular fact in connection with this statute that has been urged to prove its invalidity. Another Parliament was called later in the same year,[2] which met on Monday the octave of Michaelmas (October 6), and the Commons presented a petition to the King for its repeal, saying that it had been passed without the assent of the Commons; "for it was never their intent to be *justifiés*, or to bind themselves or their successors to the prelates more than their ancestors have been in times past." More remarkable still, this petition seems to have had the royal assent; for the words "Y plest au Roi" are actually written under it in the Parliament Roll.[3] Yet the Bill, thus apparently successful, was never enrolled on the statute roll nor published as an Act of Parliament; the Act which it was intended to repeal remained in force, and commissions continued to be issued from time to time for its execution. If the words of royal assent to the petition be not an accidental error upon the roll, the incident only proves the inconsistencies that arose in a time of violent turmoil. Who was it that appended those words to the Bill? King Richard himself was still

[1] Patent 6, Ric. II. part 1, memb. 35. See Calendar.

[2] In the same year of our Lord, but in the sixth year of the reign, not in the fifth, like the previous Act.

[3] *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 141.

under age and in the hands of his Council. Was it John of Gaunt, the friend of Wycliffe, who objected to putting new powers into the hands of the bishops? In any case the Act of Repeal was evidently considered invalid.[1]

We must go back, however, to the early summer and see what was doing in the country about the time that the Earthquake Council was held in London. At Oxford, that home for quiet study, Wycliffe's disciples were creating a rather serious commotion. One Nicholas of Hereford, a master of theology, going far beyond Wycliffe himself, maintained in the schools that Archbishop Sudbury had been righteously slain in Tyler's insurrection because he wished to censure his beloved master Wycliffe in whose writings not a single falsehood could be found. On this Friar Peter Stokes, a Carmelite, who had been a whole year preaching against Wycliffe's doctrines, caused a formal list of his errors and heresies to be drawn up by notaries. But Hereford, *modo hæreticorum*, as our authority remarks, would not communicate the book or a single sheet of it to any other divine; he simply went on as he had begun, and on Ascension Day (May 15), he preached a violent sermon inciting the people still to insurrection. Then a newly-made doctor, Philip Repingdon, a canon of Leicester, who even before his graduation had been preaching Wycliffite doctrine in Northamptonshire, was appointed to preach at the cross of St. Frideswide's on Corpus Christi Day (June 5). But as, just after taking his degree, he had professed himself ready to defend all that Wycliffe had said on moral questions, though he would not commit himself upon the sacrament till God should enlighten the hearts of the clergy, Catholics feared the conse-

Wycliffe's disciples at Oxford.

[1] It is really a question whether, in the then existing state of the Constitution, lack of consent by the Commons was more fatal to the validity of an Act of Parliament than lack of assent by the bishops would have been in the case of the second Act.

quences, and Friar Stokes received orders from the Archbishop to publish that day just before the sermon the Acts of the Synod in condemnation of Wycliffe's conclusions.[1]

The Archbishop also wrote to the Chancellor of the University, Dr. Robert Rigge, expressing surprise that he had shown so much favour to Hereford as to allow him to preach the University sermon when he was notoriously suspected of heretical leanings, and charged him to assist Stokes in publishing the Acts of the Synod. Friar Stokes did his very best; but the Chancellor complained that he was proposing to infringe the liberties of the University, over which neither bishops nor archbishops had any power, even in a matter of heresy. And no doubt such a seat of learning ought to have been a place of free discussion, though free discussion and authoritative preaching are somewhat different matters. The Chancellor, however, on taking counsel, promised openly that he would aid Friar Stokes; but he summoned to his assistance about a hundred armed men, and asked the Mayor of Oxford, whom he had won over to his side, to bring with him a similar force. So with the Mayor and his proctors the Chancellor proceeded to the sermon, which proved to be a very Wycliffite discourse indeed, suggesting spoliation of churches, and that temporal lords should be commended before bishops in sermons, saying also that the Duke of Lancaster had a mind to defend all Lollards, and so forth.[2]

Friar Stokes had presented the Archbishop's letters to the Chancellor on Wednesday the 4th, the day before the sermon. The Chancellor kept them all that Thursday. Then on Friday, as the Chancellor had told him that he required evidence at least under an authentic seal to show that he was bound to assist him, Stokes delivered to him in full congregation

[1] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 296-7, 306-7.

[2] *Op. cit.*, 298-300.

the Archbishop's letters patent under his secret seal. Thereupon he protested that he was willing to assist Stokes in the publication of the letters, subject, however, to the approval of the University which he must consult in the first place. On this Stokes wrote to the Archbishop that he durst not for his life proceed any further.[1]

He was bolder, however, than he made himself out to be. For Repingdon having next day disputed in the schools in commendation of his own order (the Augustinian), as being the nearest approach to secular life,[2] Stokes "determined" against him publicly, proving that spiritual lords, such as the Pope and the bishops, should be commended before temporal lords, and that this was not against Holy Scripture. That day, however, there appeared in the schools twelve men with armour underneath their garments, and Stokes was afraid he should be murdered before he left his chair. On hearing this the Archbishop wrote to him to leave Oxford at once and return to him. Stokes, of course, obeyed, and arriving in London at night made a full report to the Archbishop at Lambeth on the 13th. The Chancellor of the University also had come up to London upon summons along with Master Thomas Brightwell, another of the new sect, and was heard on the 12th by the Archbishop, who found both of them guilty of contempt. The Chancellor was compelled to ask pardon on his knees, which was granted at the intercession of Bishop William of Wykeham.[3] That same day he and Brightwell, along with Friar Stokes and eight other additional divines, attended a second congregation at the Blackfriars, and added their signatures to the condem-

[1] *Op. cit.*, 300-301. A very curious Wycliffite account of this Oxford disputation will be found in a contemporary poem, printed in Brewer's *Monumenta Franciscana*, 591-601.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 57.

[3] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 302-8.

nation of the twenty-four Wycliffite conclusions. The Chancellor then went back to Oxford with two letters from the Archbishop: the first enjoining him to publish the condemnation and forbid Wycliffe, Hereford, Repingdon, and other suspected heretics from preaching or discharging any academic function until they had purged themselves before the Primate, while the second forbade him to molest any of the clergy who had agreed in the condemnation.[1]

On the 18th[2] a third congregation was held, at which Nicholas of Hereford, with two other famous Wycliffites, Philip Repingdon and John Ashton, B.D., refused to answer to the twenty-four conclusions. Hereford and Repingdon, however, only required time for consideration, which was granted. Ashton said he asked for no delay, but he desired to keep silence. The Archbishop warned him of the danger of excommunication as one *vehementer suspectus*, and appointed him to come before him on the 20th at Lambeth, or in the same place, to show why sentence should not be pronounced against him. A fourth congregation was accordingly held on that day, at which Ashton was pronounced a heretic. But Hereford and Repingdon handed in a full statement touching the twenty-four Wycliffite conclusions, admitting in detail that nine were heretical, that one might lend itself to an heretical interpretation, and that fourteen were erroneous or liable to misconstruction.[3] The Archbishop laid their replies before the doctors present, but they did not think them satisfactory, and he felt it his duty to admonish them to give an unsophisticated answer, ordering them to be before him again on the 27th wherever he should be. Before sentence was pronounced on Ashton the Arch-

[1] Wilkins, iii. 159, 160; *Fascic. Zizan.*, 309.

[2] The date "xiv. kal. Junii" in *Fascic. Zizan.*, 289, is clearly erroneous, and Shirley's suggested correction is wrong also.

[3] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 318-25; Wilkins, 160-63.

bishop again formally asked him to state his opinions on the twenty-four conclusions. He answered, unlike a scholar, in English, to appeal to popular sympathy, professing always, just as if he were a layman, to believe as the Church believed; but whether the bread remained after consecration bread, material, particular or universal, he said it was a matter that passed his understanding; and he would give no other answer except that he added some unseemly sarcasms. This from a clerical graduate was not to be tolerated, and he was declared a convicted heretic.[1]

Ashton pronounced a heretic.

Ashton appealed to the people from his prison cell by writing a confession in English and Latin, and getting friends to circulate it in various copies through the streets of London. It was such a confession as might seem fairly orthodox to the unlearned, if they were to be the judges. It contained a statement that the bread held in the priest's hands became by virtue of the sacramental words really and truly the very body of Christ. Further, he agreed with whatever Scripture or the Church determined in the matter. He protested that he had never taken up the position that material bread remained after consecration, for the matter was beyond his understanding.[2] But he had to remain in prison till it was seen what should be done to him.

On Friday, June 27, Hereford, Repingdon, and one Thomas Hilman appeared before the Archbishop at Oxford, but the Archbishop, not having there assembled a proper court of divines and canonists, prorogued the hearing to Tuesday the 1st July, when he was ready for them at Canterbury in the chapter-house. But only Hilman appeared, and he, being asked what he thought of the twenty-four conclusions, agreed in their condemnation. Two other bachelors of theology and six doctors were added that day to the divines who had previously condemned them,

[1] Wilkins, iii. 163-4.

[2] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 329-30.

making in all ten bishops, thirty doctors of theology, six doctors of laws, thirteen bachelors of theology, and four or more bachelors of canon and civil law. Hereford and Repingdon were then pronounced contumacious. They set up an appeal to the Holy See, which they posted on the doors of St. Paul's and St. Mary-le-Bow; but the Archbishop declared it frivolous, and published his sentence of excommunication against them for contumacy. The King himself followed up the matter by a writ to the Chancellor and proctors at Oxford to make strict inquiry, and banish from the University all who took part with Wycliffe, Hereford, Repingdon, or Ashton, until they had proved their innocence before the Archbishop.[1] Next day another writ had to be issued to the same authorities on a different matter.[2]

The war, in fact, was by no means ended, but was rather becoming more complicated. When the Chancellor came up to London to the Archbishop, he protested that even for fear of his life he durst not publish at Oxford the condemnation passed upon the twenty-four theses. "Then," said the Primate, "the University is an abettor of heresies and will not allow Catholic truths to be published." Next day he procured from the King's Council an order to the Chancellor to execute his mandate, which accordingly the Chancellor did on the Sunday following at Oxford. Great was then the outcry of the secular clergy against the friars, whom they accused of wishing to destroy the University; while the friars, who on their part professed only to defend the cause of the Church, stood in fear of personal violence.[3]

Just then, in spite of all these orders, one Henry Crumpe, a regent in theology, was suspended at St. Mary's Church on the ground that he had provoked disturbance of the peace by calling the heretics

[1] Wilkins, iii. 164-5; *Fascic. Zizan.*, 290-91.
[2] Wilkins, 166-7.
[3] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 311.

Lollards. He was a Cistercian monk of the monastery of Baltinglass in Ireland, and was in London at the time of his suspension assisting the Archbishop in the condemnation of the twenty-four theses. So being pronounced contumacious, judgment was passed upon him by default. He appealed to the King's Council, who, having investigated the case, pronounced the process invalid, and ordered that he should be restored, and that none of the academic authorities should molest either him or Friar Stokes or Stephen Patrington, another Carmelite, or any divines, religious or secular, who supported them in their condemnation of Wycliffite doctrines.[1]

On July 20 Dr. Rigge certified the Archbishop that in pursuance of his mandate he had declared Hereford and Repingdon excommunicated in St. Mary's Church, and caused search to be made for them unsuccessfully. In a few months, however, it appeared that the Archbishop's firmness had prevailed. Philip Repingdon confessed his errors and, having cleared himself of all heresy before the Archbishop in Synod, was restored by an archiepiscopal letter of the 23rd October following; Ashton was restored likewise on the 27th November; and both made full abjurations in Convocation at Oxford,[2] while Nicholas of Hereford, carrying his appeal to Rome, was imprisoned there and liberated afterwards by a popular rising.[3] Taking leave of this episode, I may add that Repingdon, being now quite opposed to Wycliffe, became successively Abbot of Leicester, Chancellor of Oxford, Bishop of Lincoln, and finally a cardinal.

Philip Repingdon submits.

Thus it will be seen that, until overruled by authority, the University of Oxford — perhaps the most intellectual society in the whole kingdom—was largely in favour of Wycliffe's views and proud of him as a teacher. On the other hand, it is evident

[1] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 314-17; cf. 289; Wilkins, 167.
[2] Wilkins, 169, 172.
[3] Knighton, ii. 172-3.

that the devotion of his followers was not a little supported by riot and intimidation. When such was the case in a seat of learning, what was to be expected elsewhere?

In William Swynderby at Leicester we have one example of the sort of preachers authority was seeking to control. His early history is related as follows:— He was generally called "the hermit," because he had led for some time a hermit's life at Leicester. He declaimed first against female pride and frailties to an extent that roused the indignation of the sex, who threatened to drive him out of the town with stones. He then attacked rich men and merchants, whom he made too uncomfortable by repeatedly telling them that a rich man could not enter the kingdom of heaven. He again sought a solitary life in the Duke of Lancaster's woods near Leicester, sometimes showing himself in the town, but declining offers of food sent out to him on the ground that he had enough to support him with the aid of the Duke. His supplies, however, by and by ran short, and, ashamed to return to the town, he became a guest in the neighbouring abbey, where the canons received him with great reverence as a man of peculiar sanctity. Still avoiding the town, he then visited and preached in country churches round about; and collecting a little company of Wycliffites at a chapel of St. John the Baptist near a leper-house, he began to inveigh against the liberties of the Church, and revile churchmen and their ways, telling the people that parishioners were not bound to give tithes to their curates, and so forth. On this he was suspended by the Bishop of Lincoln, who forbade him to preach in any church, chapel, or churchyard in his diocese. Taking this inhibition, apparently, by the letter, he made a pulpit between two millstones placed for sale on the highway outside his chapel, and, collecting a crowd, said he could and would preach in the highway in the teeth

Career of William Swynderby.

of his bishop if he only had the good-will of the people. Having thus dared the penalty of excommunication, he drew people after him more than ever. The bishop then cited him to appear in Lincoln Cathedral; and he did so, accompanied by a troop of Leicester friends. To their dismay, however, he was convicted of heresy on many points, and, as the contemporary historian remarks, had earned a fiery death. Happily for him, however, John of Gaunt was that day at Lincoln, and procured from the bishop a mitigation of his punishment. He was to confess the falsehood of his preaching publicly on feast days in the churches where he had preached, declaring that what he had said was against the determination of Mother Church and of holy doctors, and promising that he would never preach again in the diocese of Lincoln without the bishop's licence. He did what was enjoined on him, first at Lincoln on the 11th July 1382, and afterwards at Leicester in several of the churches there and the country round about.[1]

His recantation.

He was made to renounce five dogmas as errors and six as heresies.[2] The errors were:—1. That men might ask payment of their debts out of charity, but by no means imprison any one for them. 2. That if parishioners knew their curate to be incontinent and a bad man, they ought to withdraw their tithes; otherwise they were abettors of his sins. 3. That tithes are pure alms, and if curates were bad men they might lawfully be given to others. 4. That a bad curate excommunicating his subjects for with-

[1] Knighton, ii. 189-98; *Fascic. Zizan.*, 334-40.

[2] This distinction deserves some consideration, as showing the anxiety of the bishop not to be too severe. The five errors were to be censured, although they were plausible, and such as a loyal churchman might easily be led into believing. The six heresies not only were false doctrine, but clearly tended to confusion and the destruction of all authority and order in the Church. The continuator of Knighton has made a curious confusion between the two lists, partly due, apparently, to an original error in the record corrected by the bishop himself, and has made of them only two heresies and eleven errors, though even in his own transcript the eleven should be only nine, as there is no sixth or seventh error.

holding tithes was simply an extortioner. 5. That no prelate could excommunicate any man unless he first knew him to be excommunicated by God. The heresies were :—1. That a child was not truly baptized if the priest or any of the sponsors was in mortal sin. 2. That no one whose mode of living was against the law of God was a priest, even if ordained by a bishop. 3. That any priest can absolve a contrite sinner, and notwithstanding his bishop's prohibition is bound to preach the gospel to the people. 4. That a priest receiving any annual allowance by compact is, by the very fact, simoniacal and excommunicated. 5. That any priest in mortal sin, if he set himself to make the body of Christ, rather commits idolatry than consecrates. 6. That no priest enters any house but to ill-treat the wife, the daughter, or the maid; and he therefore begged that husbands would beware of letting any priest into their houses.[1]

After this recantation his popularity in Leicester suffered a woful diminution, and he remained at his chapel solitary, no one now caring to visit him. At last he could bear it no longer and fled to Coventry, where he recovered his popularity and preached for about a year, of course bringing many over to his "execrable sect," till the bishop's attention was called to the matter, and he was driven out of that diocese also "with the greatest shame."[2]

He retreated apparently into the neighbouring diocese of Hereford;[3] where by and by he was complained of to the bishop, who cited him to appear before him at Kington on Wednesday the 14th June 1391. How early he came into this diocese does not

[1] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 337-9; also less accurately in Knighton, ii. 196-7.
[2] Knighton, ii. 197-8.
[3] We find his further history in Foxe (iii. 107-131), who, however, is inaccurate about the first part, dating the Lincoln prosecution in 1389 instead of 1382, and making it appear that he removed to Hereford diocese immediately after, nothing being said of his abode in that of Coventry.

appear precisely, but it must have been at least as early as 1390, when he received warning at Monmouth by episcopal letters, which he read word by word, that no person whatever was to preach or teach or expound the Scriptures to the people within that diocese, either in sacred buildings or elsewhere, without sufficient authority; notwithstanding which he preached, on the 1st August that year at Whitney, a number of objectionable doctrines.

His appearance before the Bishop of Hereford.

On the 14th June 1391 he appeared before the bishop according to summons, and was given till Friday, the last day of the month, to make answer to the articles against him in the church of Bodenham. On the 30th, accordingly, he appeared again before the bishop, when he handed in a lengthy written reply, and at once withdrew, having had a promise of perfect freedom not only to come but to depart. This document was a protestation that he did not mean to assert anything that was against Holy Writ or the belief of the Church, and to each separate count of the indictment he replied that he had not said the things imputed to him, but was accused falsely by friars; and he explained in each case what he had really said, premising that he had offered to purge himself of those imputations before the Bishop of Lincoln and his commissaries by the testimony of thirteen priests of good fame. "And so I did," he adds, "with a letter, and twelve seals thereby, from the Mayor of Leicester and from true burgesses, and thirty men to witness with me, as the Duke of Lancaster knew and heard, the Earl of Derby, and other great men that were that time in the town, that I never said them, taught them, ne preached them. But when I should have made my purgation, there stooden forth five friars or moe, that some of them never saw me before, ne heard me, and three lecherous priests openly known, some living in their lechery

twenty year (men sayden) or more, as by their childer was openly known. Some of these they clepiden denunciations, and some weren cleped comprobations, that weren there falsely forsworn, they suing busily and crying, with many another friar, with great instance, to give the doom upon me, to burn me, and boughten dry wood before, as men tolden in that town. And [by] these slights, and swearing and money giving, as men saiden, with favor of the bishop (by what law I wot not, but soothly not by God's law), they saiden, they held me as convicted, [and I] might not have forth my purgation. So as I fully forsook them, and never granted that I said them."[1]

Here it will be observed that he explains away his own recantation made nine years before as forced upon him by the perjury of some friars of very bad character, who urged the passing of a sentence against him, in anticipation of which they had actually bought dry wood to burn him. This statement, though given as a mere report, must be taken as a confirmation of what Knighton's Continuator says, that it was only through John of Gaunt's personal intervention that he was saved from the stake. And yet, before this time, we have hardly any notice of such a thing as burning for heresy in England, the first well-known case, which we shall speak of by and by, being in the year 1401. Heretics in this country, in fact, seem to have been rare before the end of the fourteenth century, and by what law they could have been sent to the fire even at that time is not quite apparent, except that there was a universal obligation on secular rulers recognised in all Christian countries to purge their dominions of men troublesome to the Christian commonwealth. Nay, the Council of the Lateran, in 1215, had decreed that the temporal lord who

[1] Foxe, iii. 113.

declined to do so after admonition himself incurred excommunication.[1]

Heresy was, in fact, a thing detested everywhere, and no one readily admitted that he was a heretic, or even considered himself so. Swynderby would not even confess to the Bishop of Hereford that he had been justly convicted before the Bishop of Lincoln. He had only, for fear of death, renounced certain opinions without conceding that he had uttered them. But whether he felt in his own mind really exculpated or not, he had no confidence that his justification would be accepted, and he kept out of the way as much as possible while the Bishop of Hereford, on the 5th July, cited him by edict to appear at "North Lodebury" (or Ledbury) on the 20th. He put in no appearance, but caused a servant to deliver "a certain schedule of paper, made like an indenture, to excuse him." Not satisfied with this, the Bishop again summoned him to be at Pontesbury on the 29th, where, as he again failed to appear, he was pronounced obstinate. The Bishop, nevertheless, gave him another appointment for the 8th August at Cleobury Mortimer, and, when he again failed, another for the 16th at Whitbourne, where he was

[1] See Maitland's *Canon Law in the Church of England*, ch. vi. Besides the extraordinary case in 1222 of the deacon who became an apostate to marry a Jewess, there were certainly burnings for heresy long before the fifteenth century. Even in the first half of the fourteenth we hear that the opposition of the over zealous Franciscans to Pope John XXII. led to many of them being burned, not only in the south of France, Italy, and Germany, but even in England, where some were burned, we are told, "in a certain wood."—*Chron. de Melsa*, ii. 323 (Rolls Series). See also Arnold's *Select English Works of Wyclif*, Introduction, pp. viii.-xi. I must observe, however, that Arnold's reference to this passage in the Chronicle of Meaux is misleading, and virtually a misquotation, for it gives the impression that fifty-five men and eight women were burned in England in the wood referred to, whereas the words of the Abbot of Meaux imply that that number comprehended the victims not only in England, but in various other countries in the year 1330. The English victims, very likely, were only four or five, who must have been driven into the wood like outlaws. Bishop Stubbs considers it doubtful whether any one had ever been capitally punished for heresy in England before Wycliffe's time, and notes that the chronicler of Meaux lived long after the period he wrote about (*Constitutional History*, ii. 470, ed. 1874-78).

once more pronounced obstinate for not appearing. And now the Bishop, having perused the whole process against him before the Bishop of Lincoln, solemnly pronounced him to be a heretic, schismatic, and "false informer of the people, and such as is to be avoided of faithful Christians."

Swynderby, however, was not even then at the end of his resources. He took a step which was in that day unusual, though suggested by Wycliffe's teaching and example.[1] He appealed to the King in Council, and at the same time addressed a long letter to the nobles and burgesses in Parliament, a good deal like a sermon in character, the contents of which he desired them to set forth "to most worship to our God, and to showing of the truth and amending of Holy Church." It is a strange kind of exhortation to be addressed to Parliament. The appeal to the King, however, is a most interesting document. By the preamble it would seem that he did at length make an appearance before the Bishop of Hereford and his divines on the 3rd October, and said that if he could be shown by God's laws that his conclusions or answers were erroneous, he was ready to revoke them. This, however, must have been after the Bishop had actually given sentence against him, which, apparently, was on the 16th August; for it is added in the very same preamble, that because he would not acknowledge himself guilty the Bishop had pronounced sentence against him in his absence. But the justification he puts forward for appealing to the King is altogether extraordinary, based as it is on principles which were never acknowledged by the Church till the days of Henry VIII. He gave five reasons for it:—

Swynderby's appeal to the King.

[1] See his fifth conclusion promulgated at Leicester (Walsingham, ii. 54). He himself appealed to Richard II. against the condemnation of his sacramental views at Oxford, a futile proceeding, as the King could have no idea of pronouncing judgment on such a matter. And John of Gaunt came down and forbade him to speak about it further (*Fascic. Zizan.*, 114).

One cause is, for the King's court, in such matter, is above the bishop's court; for after that the bishop has accursed, he may ne feare (qu. he may no further?) by his law, but then mote he sech (seek?) succour of the King's law, and by a writ of *significavit* put a man in prison.

The second cause is, for in cause of heresy there liggeth judgment of death, and that doom may not be given without the King's justices. For the bishop will say, *Nobis non licet interficere quenquam*; that is, "It is not lawful for us to kill any man," as they sayden to Pilate when Christ should be deemed. And for I think that no justice will give suddenly an untrue doom, as the bishop did, and therefore openly I appeal to hem, and send my conclusions to the knights of the parliament to be showed to the lords, and to be taken to the justices, to be well aviset or that they geven dome.

The third cause is, for it was a false dome; for no man is a heretic but he that masterfully defends his error or heresy and stiffly maintains it. And mine answer has been alway conditional, as the people openly knows; for ever I say, and yet say, and always will, that if they cannen shew me by God's law that I have erred I will gladly ben amendet and revoke mine errors. And so I am no heretic, ne never more in God's grace will ben in no wise.

The fourth cause is, for the bishop's law that they deem men by, is full of errors and heresies, contrary to the truth of Christ's law of the gospel.

In proof of this fourth point he says that Christ's law bids us love our enemies, while the Pope's law gives us leave to slay them, and grants men pardons to war against the heathen and slay them; and other matters are added in which the two are contrasted. And the fifth cause given is that "the Pope's law, that bishops demen men by, is the same unrightful law that Christ was deemed by of the bishops, with the scribes and Pharisees." For just as the latter gave more credit to two false witnesses against Christ than to all the people that witnessed to His true preaching and miracles, so "the bishops of the Pope's law" gave more credit to two heretics and apostates, or two common women, against a

man in a case of heresy, than to thousands of good people.[1]

That this appeal took no effect is presumable from the mere fact that we know nothing more about it; and we know nothing either of what finally became of Swynderby. He and another heretic named Stephen Bell had escaped to the borders of Wales, where they remained in hiding.[2] It is pretty certain that he was not burned. He had been favoured both by John of Gaunt and by his son the Earl of Derby, afterwards King Henry IV., and no doubt he had good reason for believing that many of the knights in Parliament sympathised both with him and with Wycliffe. But the King could never have found it his interest to set his own authority against the jurisdiction of the Church in the way he was invited to do; and if Swynderby did not ultimately submit to episcopal correction, he probably died either in concealment or in prison. With all the popularity he at one time commanded, he had repeatedly evaded summonses to justify himself before the Bishop of Hereford, and it was not wonderful that sentence against him was at last pronounced, though the Bishop had been anxious to show him the utmost possible indulgence. Nor did he improve his case by suggesting, as he did in his fourth and fifth reasons, that the canon law by which such cases were determined was iniquitous, and ought to be set aside. And yet there is something in his attitude towards undoubted abuses that claims our sympathy. The Church was evidently in bondage to much moral evil, which the best men in her knew not how to remedy; and it is to be feared that the very earnestness of his denunciations did much to strengthen the opposition raised against him. What he said about some of his opponents is only too

[1] Foxe, iii. 126-8.

[2] Foxe (iii. 195) prints a commission from the King for their arrest, issued on the 9th March 1392.

probable. Chaucer, who has nothing to conceal in what he saw of the world around him, suggests in one passage of his great poem that it was not uncommon to find average laymen leading better lives than the clergy, and what a reproach it was to see a filthy shepherd and clean sheep! That the friars, bound to poverty and celibacy, had grown luxurious by begging, and often unchaste by the opportunities offered to them by their very popularity, there cannot be a doubt. The privileges of the clergy and the laxity of discipline—for confession, with inadequate penance and far too easy absolution kept them generally safe from secular interference—could hardly fail to breed such mischief. And this, no doubt, was a source of much sympathy with Wycliffite principles, which appealed to the laity and to secular princes to correct the clergy. But if other good men besides Wycliffites felt the evil, they probably felt at the same time that it was hopeless to propose to dethrone the canon law by royal authority; and secular princes were the last men on earth to take upon themselves such a responsibility till Henry VIII. did it at length from passion and self-will.

So Swynderby's appeal to the King was not very hopeful. But he had a warm admirer in one Walter Brute, a learned layman, and, as he called himself, a Briton, that is, a Welshman, who was not afraid to eat, drink, and confer with him, even in the January following the episcopal sentence of excommunication. The spirit of Lollardy, indeed, had been strong in Brute for years past. He had often been accused of heresy before Archbishop Courtenay, and also before John Gilbert, Bishop of Hereford, now of St. David's,[1] the predecessor of the present bishop, John Treffnant, who had excommunicated Swynderby. And now he

Walter Brute.

[1] In the articles exhibited against Brute, printed in Foxe, iii. 132, Gilbert is spoken of as "John, late Bishop of Hereford, your predecessor, and now Bishop of St. Asaph." It should have been "now Bishop of St. David's."

was denounced to Bishop Treffnant himself. He was accused of having boldly taught and stubbornly affirmed a number of outrageous doctrines, among others that every Christian man and woman being without sin, could "make the body of Christ as well as the priest," and, moreover, that the Pope was Antichrist and a seducer of the people. It was not surprising that such a man ventured to maintain publicly that the Bishop's sentence against Swynderby was unjust, which he did within a fortnight after it was delivered, declaring that Swynderby's doctrines were true and Catholic. Being called on to defend himself, he presented to the Bishop a writing containing two "suppositions," as they were called in the schools, upon which he proposed to establish, by aid of Scripture, two "probable conclusions." The two "suppositions" were in brief: First, that if the Pope made laws against Christ's gospel, he was "the idol of desolation sitting in the temple of God," spoken of by Daniel, and referred to by our Lord himself; and, second, that if the city of Rome accepted his traditions, she was "Babylon the great." This is the kernel of the argument, which is enveloped in a great mass of scriptural quotations; and prefixed is a very long preamble, containing a modest protest that he might err, and would be glad to be set right by the authority of Scripture, but that he would not accept the bare words of any teacher except Christ unless supported by holy writ.

The Bishop, to judge by his name, was a Welshman himself,[1] and perhaps might have understood his countryman; but he did not quite see that the argument was conclusive, and informed him that it was too short and obscure, requesting him "to write upon the same more plainly and more at large." The courage shown in making such a request was truly wonderful, though no doubt the Bishop did it from a

[1] There seems to be no biography of him anywhere.

sense of duty. It brought down upon him, as might have been expected, an answer which was voluminous enough. A first part, as printed by Foxe, fills no less than nineteen closely printed pages in small type in one edition, at about 930 words to a page! But this was nothing to the extent of the second part, of which Foxe avowedly gives only extracts, omitting considerable passages for the sake of brevity, though extracts alone, taken by themselves, fill over twenty-six pages! Of the contents I will only say that the first part is a wonderful mixture of humility with an intimation that mysteries are hidden from the wise and prudent, which are sometimes revealed to lay persons and sinners; that the time was come for disclosing Antichrist, as it was "the last conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the sign of the Twins, which is the house of Mercury," a token surely of the Second Coming of Christ! Then follows a multitude of Apocalyptic arguments to prove that the Pope is Antichrist, and so forth. For the rest I must be content to refer the curious reader to the text of both parts in Foxe.

The Bishop, having taken these papers into consideration, summoned Walter Brute to be before him in Hereford Cathedral on Friday, the 3rd October 1393. This summons it is clear that he had prepared to resist by force with the aid of some confederates. But as the King had sent down a commission to various gentlemen of Herefordshire to make proclamation against any assemblies or conventicles, levies or confederacies dangerous to the peace on account of him "and other such children of iniquity,"[1] he was compelled to put in an appearance. He was "apposed" of a number of errors and heresies in his writings in the presence of "divers prelates and abbots, and twenty bachelors of divinity, whereof

[1] Foxe, iii. 196-7. The date, 22nd Sept., 17 Ric. II., is 1393, not 1394, as given in the margin.

twelve were monks and two doctors of the law." With all his ability, Brute found himself unable to defend his positions before such a tribunal. The sittings were continued on Saturday and Sunday; but at last he gave in his submission to the Church, and read it out from a scroll at the cross in the churchyard on Monday in the presence, not only of the Bishop, but of a great concourse of people, including barons, knights, noblemen, and clergy. Then followed a sermon preached by Thomas Crawley, B.D., on Romans xi.,[1] "Be not over-wise in your own conceits, but stand in fear."[2]

His submission.

So ended a case on which the Bishop and his assessors had sent to the learned at Cambridge for advice. And apparently, though the advice was not required, it gave rise to some university discussions. Erroneous and unauthorised preaching were the two great evils that the Church was chiefly aiming to put down; and its efforts were seriously hampered when influential knights and laymen, to say nothing of great lords like John of Gaunt, afforded protection and even favour to the preachers. As for John of Gaunt himself, he does not appear to have been in the least influenced by Wycliffe's theories;[3] he only sought to secure for the preacher what he considered fair-play. But a considerable body of influential knights took up the cause of the Wycliffite clergy in a way that showed that they believed in their principles most sincerely, though some of them, like Sir Lewis Clifford, ultimately took alarm at the lengths that they were prepared to go. Among these knights, besides Sir Lewis Clifford, were Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir Thomas Trussel, Sir William Nevill, Sir John Pecche, Sir John

Knights who favoured the Wycliffites.

[1] The words quoted are partly contained in Rom. xi. 25, but they look a little more like xii. 16.

[2] Foxe, iii. 131-87.

[3] This is made perfectly evident by Mr. Armitage-Smith in his recent memoir of John of Gaunt.

Clanvowe, Sir Richard Story, Sir John Montague, and Sir Reginald de Hilton, while there were dukes and earls as well who befriended the new preachers. And many of these knights would attend the lawless preachings of the enthusiasts, armed with sword and buckler, to protect them against interference.[1]

More effective still, perhaps, was the sincere fanaticism of individual laymen of a much humbler rank. At Leicester was one William Smith, his surname derived from his occupation, a man deformed in person, who, having been crossed in love, fell into a religious melancholy, renouncing for ever the attractions of the fair sex and all the desirable things of this world. He gave up the use of flesh meat and fish; wine and beer he avoided like poison; he walked about barefoot for many years, and in the meantime learned to read and write. He had much conference with Richard Waytestathe, chaplain, at the chapel of St. John the Baptist, which closely adjoined a leper-house outside the town of Leicester. There the sect held frequent meetings, and took counsel together at an inn, where they had set up a school for the promotion of their own views. One day the chaplain and William Smith were both very hungry. They had a supply of cabbages, but had no fuel to cook them with, till one of them, casting his eyes on an old image of St. Katharine in one corner, said, "Look, my friend, God has provided us fuel; this image will be holy fuel. By hatchet and fire she will suffer a new martyrdom, and perhaps, by cruel pains, arrive some time in the kingdom of heaven." So the one took the hatchet while the other held the image. "Let us see if she be a true saint," said one; "for, if so, she will bleed; if not, she will be good for fire to cook with." This was quite in accordance with Lollard philosophy; for they were accustomed to speak of the images to

William Smith of Leicester.

[1] Knighton, ii. 181; Walsingham, ii. 159.

which people made pilgrimages as "the Witch of Lincoln" and "the Witch of Walsingham." But the outrage was a little too great, even for local feeling, and they were turned out of the inn.[1]

Now, it would seem to have been true, even at this time, as stated by Swynderby in his appeal to the King, that a prosecution for heresy in a spiritual court might lead on conviction to the heretic being put to death; but we do not know exactly by what process this could have been done, nor do we know an actual instance in which it had yet taken place. Sorely tried as the Church might be, moreover, with cases of heresy and irreverence, she could only prosecute individuals, sometimes by wearisome stages, though they commonly had to submit in the end. But as the Church herself had no coercive power, and the heretics were largely protected by knights with armed retinues, it is clear that a state of things existed which was dangerous to the peace of the country.

Richard II. recalled from Ireland to avert danger from the Lollards.

After Richard II. had gone to Ireland in 1394, we learn from the historian Walsingham,[2] that two prelates of no less eminence than the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London went over to him there, with other persons deputed by the clergy in England, to request his immediate return in order to avert danger from the designs of the Lollards; for they were seeking not only to take away all the possessions of the Church, but to destroy all canonical sanctions. Such is the general statement of their designs; and the King was so impressed by the reality of the danger that he came back from Ireland as soon as he possibly could, "judging it more necessary," says the historian, "to succour the faith when it was in danger than to strive for temporal kingdoms." On his return, in 1395, he severely rebuked

[1] Knighton, ii. 180, 183.
[2] Walsingham's *Hist. Anglicana* (Rolls ed.), ii. 215-17.

several knights and nobles with the most terrible threats if they should give any encouragement to Lollards in future; and he bound Sir Richard Story, in particular, by an oath never to uphold Lollard opinions any more, warning him that he should die a most shameful death if he did so.[1]

The Lollards had been so bold as to affix publicly to the doors of St. Paul's Church and Westminster Abbey placards containing "abominable accusations" of the clergy, and "conclusions hitherto unheard of" against ecclesiastical personages and the sacraments.[2] That they had been encouraged by Story and the others whom the King rebuked was the general opinion, which there seems no reason to doubt. Nor were they satisfied with using the most conspicuous church doors for the publication of their libels, but it would seem that they embodied their "abominable accusations and conclusions" in a bill which they presented to Parliament, and of which the precise text has been preserved. For there can be no doubt that the twelve conclusions urged upon Parliament "about the eighteenth year of Richard II."[3] were precisely those affixed to the doors of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, and, moreover, that the date was precisely the eighteenth year, that is to say, during the Parliament which met in January 1395 while the King was away.

The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards.

Prefixed to these conclusions was the following preamble :—

We, pore men, tresoreris of Cryst and His apostlis, denuncyn to the lordis and the comunys of the Parlement certeyn conclusionis and treuthis for the reformaciun of

[1] Walsingham's *Hist. Anglicana* (Rolls ed.), ii. 215-17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

[3] See *Fascic. Zizan.* (edited by Shirley in the Rolls Series), 360-68, where the text of these conclusions is given in Latin. It appears, however, that they were drawn up in English with a preamble which does not appear in the Latin translation. See Mr. Cronin's article in the *English Historical Review*, xxii. 292-304.

Holi Chirche of Yngeland, the qwyche han ben blynde and leprouse many yere be mayntenaunce of the proude prelacye, born up with flatringe of privat religion, the qwich is multiplied to a gret charge and onerous to puple her (*here*) in Yngelonde.

The first conclusion may also be given in the very words of the original :—

Qwan the Chirche of Yngeland began to dote in temporalte after her stepmodir, the grete Chirche of Rome, and chirchis were slayne be appropriacion to divers placys, feyth, hope and charitè begunne for to fle out of oure Chirche. For pride with his sori genealogie of dedly synnes chalingith it be title of heritage. This conclusiun is general and provid be experience, custum and manere, as thu schalt herin aftir.

The fact that the Church is corrupted by temporal wealth and power is more or less true in every age ; but the remedy of enforced apostolic poverty is of doubtful application, as every disturbance of the rights of property is demoralising. The conclusion, however, was, as the petitioners themselves remarked, a general one, proved by ordinary experience. In fact, the petitioners here were on perfectly safe ground, and pointed only to evils which all churchmen deplored. Churches were really "slain" by appropriations—the life was taken out of them, and the decay of faith, hope, and charity was but a natural result. Even the aspersion of the Church of Rome as a stepmother perverted by these causes implied no real disloyalty to the Church Catholic. But the remonstrants went on, secondly, to denounce the "usual" priesthood, derived from Rome and said to be more exalted than the angels, as being quite a different priesthood from that which Christ ordained to His apostles ; the proof of which was that signs, rites, and pontifical benedictions were used which were nowhere set forth in Scripture.

The other conclusions were to the following effect :

—III. Priests' vows of chastity, imposed originally to the prejudice of women, tended to gross vice. Private religious orders ought to be abolished. IV. The feigned miracle of the sacrament led all men except a few into idolatry; for they thought that the body of Christ, which was never out of heaven, could be enclosed by the words of a priest in a small piece of bread. But Wycliffe had shown in his *Trialogus* that the bread of the altar is the body of Christ *habitualiter* (*i.e.* by estimation, or in other words figuratively[1]), and every faithful man and woman who believed in God's law could make the sacrament of that bread without any such miracle. V. Exorcisms and blessings pronounced on various things, such as wine, bread, water and oil, salt, wax and incense, church walls, vestments, cup, mitre, cross, pilgrims' staffs, etc., were but jugglery. VI. It was against good order in a kingdom if a king was a bishop, or a prelate a judge in temporal causes, or if a beneficed clergyman held a worldly office. VII. Special prayers for the dead, for one person by name more than another, were a false ground of almsgiving, and all almshouses (*i.e.* all religious houses) in England were founded in iniquity. VIII. Pilgrimages made to blind crosses called roods and deaf images of wood and stone are not far removed from idolatry. IX. Auricular confession, which was said to be so necessary to salvation, with the feigned power of absolution, exalted the pride of the priests, and gave them opportunity of "privy calling" (secret vice is evidently insinuated) other than the petitioners were willing to say; for lords and ladies affirmed that for fear of their confessors they durst not say the truth. Moreover, the confessional tended to abuses and mortal sin. The clergy professed to have the keys of heaven and hell,

[1] See the *Trialogus*, lib. iv. cap. 7, where it is clear that *prædicatio habitudinalis* means a figurative assertion.

and would sell the blessing of heaven for a bushel of wheat or twelvepence a year by charter, with a clause of warranty under their common seal. And the Pope of Rome called himself high treasurer of the whole Church, having custody of that worthy jewel, the Passion of Christ, with the merits of all the Saints in heaven whereby he gave feigned indulgence *a pœna et a culpa*; if so, he could liberate, at will, all the prisoners in hell. X. Manslaughter by battle or pretended law of justice for any temporal cause without a special revelation was expressly contrary to the New Testament, which is the law of grace and full of mercy. XI. Vows of chastity by women, who are by nature frail and imperfect, lead to many horrible sins. XII. The multitude of unnecessary crafts used in our Church encourages sin in waste, curiosity and disguising; whereas St. Paul tells us to be content with food and raiment.

Such were the views which the Lollards pressed upon Parliament ten years after the death of Wycliffe. And, much as there may have been to say in favour of some of them (for some were really orthodox and in accordance with the best principles of the Church), others were certainly revolutionary, and endangered not only all recognised Church teachings, but even the existing fabric of society. The Church, however, had really obtained some protection from that statute of the fifth year of Richard II. against vagrant preachers, whether it was truly repealed or not; for commissions, as we have seen, continued to be issued under it from time to time. The apparently successful attempt to repeal it no doubt indicates, to say the least, that there was a very strong party in the House of Commons opposed to granting the Church parliamentary facilities for enforcing her jurisdiction. But, one way or other, the Church had actually obtained those facilities, and there seems to have been no opposition to their being

used; for few would have denied in that day that the prevention of vague and unauthorised teaching was really a good thing in itself. So we may take it that in the reign of Richard II. something effectual was done to reduce these irregularities, and make every preacher responsible to the ordinary of the place.

But, turbulent as King Richard's days were, those of Henry IV. were still more so—as might well have been expected from the way in which he ousted his predecessor and usurped the throne. And it was only natural that the general insecurity should tend to break down whatever order had been established in the Church. In 1401 heresy had again grown bold, and vagrant preaching had again become common. The clergy in Convocation found it necessary to ask Parliament to strengthen their hands; and the appeal was not made in vain. "A certain new sect," says an Act of that year, "damnably thinking of the sacraments and usurping the office of preaching," went about "under the colour of dissembled holiness," propagating doctrines against the faith. They formed illicit conventicles, kept schools, wrote books, and held disputations. The wicked preachers seduced the people into sedition and insurrection, and the bishops could not correct them because they went from diocese to diocese, evading every summons and despising the censures of the Church. The bishops were accordingly given the power to arrest and imprison offenders till they purged themselves, and if canonically convicted, to keep them in prison; finally, if a man refused to abjure, or relapsed after abjuration, so that by the canons he was left to the secular court, the sheriff of the county or municipal authorities of the place should be present to receive the culprit, and, after promulgation of the sentence, have him burned "in an high place" before the people.[1]

Order threatened still more under Henry IV.

[1] Statute 2 Hen. IV. c. 15; *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 466-7, 473-4.

The statute *de Hæretico Comburendo.*

Such was the celebrated statute *de Hæretico Comburendo*, which I think clearly owed its origin to an alarming recrudescence of Lollardy. We have, in fact, a list of some of the "execrable conclusions" which the heretics taught in those secret conventicles. For a knight, named Sir Lewis Clifford, who at first had shown favour to their zeal and devotion, found it necessary to inform Archbishop Arundel against them when he saw the lengths to which they were prepared to go. They considered—

(1) That the seven sacraments were but dead signs, of no value as the Church used them.

(2) That virginity and priesthood were not states approved by God, but the state of wedlock was best, and all virgins and priests, if they desired to be saved, should at least have the will to get married; otherwise they were homicides who destroyed the seed out of which "a second Trinity" should arise, and hindered the number both of those to be saved and of those to be damned.

(3) That agreement between a man and a woman was sufficient to constitute wedlock without their making further obedience to the Church, and many more were thus united than the world was aware.

(4) That the Church was nothing but the synagogue of Satan, and they would not go to it to honor God, or take any sacrament, least of all the sacrament of the altar, which they considered but a mouthful of bread with no life, and a tower or pinnacle of Antichrist.

(5) That if they had a boy new born, he should not be baptized by the hands of priests at church; for that boy was a second Trinity, not contaminated by sin, and would be worse if he came into their hands.

(6) That they did not hold any day as hallowed or holy, not even Sunday; but that any day they were equally free to work, to eat, and to drink.

(7) That there was no purgatory after this life, nor did it behove them to do greater penance for any sin than for the lightest, but only that those who commit it should give it up and repent it by themselves; because, as they say, whatever is stands in faith, as Christ said to Mary Magdalene, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."[1]

[1] Walsingham (Rolls ed.), ii. 252-3.

GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Of course it was the special duty of the Church to counteract such poison, whether openly or secretly disseminated, and to call upon the civil power for aid in doing so, if needful. But this statute for the burning of heretics, sometimes called the statute *Ex officio*, certainly marks the beginning of a new era in ecclesiastical and civil history. Heretics may, or may not, have been burned in England before; the point seems rather doubtful. But we must note one thing. In the previous Act of Richard II. the aim was merely to assist the bishops by ordering commissions for the arrest of those preachers who escaped out of their jurisdiction by fleeing from county to county. Now the duty of imprisoning offenders was thrown upon the bishops themselves. Long before this, undoubtedly, bishops had possessed prisons for heretics; but it was surely a symptom of revolutionary times when the civil power handed over more of its own coercive functions to those who were by nature "Fathers in God." Bishops' prisons remained, however, an odious, but apparently necessary, institution till some time after the Reformation, and the civil ruler made use of them occasionally for his own convenience.

But already, it would seem, before this Act was passed, a writ had been issued by the King during that session for the burning of one heretic, and had been actually executed under special parliamentary sanction; for the writ was dated 26th February, but was only issued "by the King and Council in Parliament" on Wednesday the 2nd March. The case, apparently, was considered urgent, fears being entertained of a riotous attempt to intimidate Convocation, which was then proceeding against the culprit by a regular canonical prosecution. For it was on Saturday the 12th February that William Sawtré, or Chatrys, was first called before them to answer for his heretical preachings. He is described as a chap- William Sawtré.

lain of London, who had already abjured ten articles of heresy before the Bishop of Norwich, and had publicly recanted them at Lynn, swearing never to preach them again. Yet now eight articles of the like character were found against him, and it was proved that he had again been promulgating the doctrines which he had abjured, particularly, that in the sacrament the bread remained of the same nature as before consecration. A copy of the articles was given him, and he was allowed ample time for his answer. When he was questioned about transubstantiation a further day was given him to consider it. He then replied that he did not understand it; and being asked more explicitly if the bread was transubstantiated into the body of Christ, he said in a derisive tone that he did not know that. He was then asked if he would stand to the determination of the Church, and answered that he would if such determination was not contrary to the divine will. His own opinion was then demanded, and he gave it that the bread remained true bread. His examination lasted three hours, and he was condemned for obstinately defending his heresies. Four days later the records of his former prosecution and recantation were submitted to him and he acknowledged them; but he still maintained a tone of mockery on the principal charge. Asked why he should not be pronounced relapsed, he had nothing to say, and order was given for his degradation. He was to be stripped successively of every ecclesiastical function, from that of priest, deacon, subdeacon, and so forth, down to that of door-keeper—seven grades in all—so that, finally, he was reduced to the state of a mere layman.[1] The writ for his burning was immediately drawn up and dated as we have seen. It was, perhaps, conceived at first that the authority of the King and Council would be sufficient warrant for the execution; but the high

[1] Wilkins, iii. 254-60.

importance of the case seemed to require the concurrence of Parliament, and when this was obtained on the 2nd March doubtless no time was lost. He was burned in Smithfield in the presence of many spectators.[1] Burned in Smithfield.

Since the case of the deacon who had turned Jew, nearly two hundred years before, Sawtré is the first heretic whose burning is upon record. That punishment was indeed practised in foreign countries, where it was warranted by the civil law; and the writ for Sawtré's execution clearly speaks of it as recognised and customary under the sanction of law, both divine and human.[2] Yet we may take it that it was an innovation in English criminal law instituted to allay dangerous agitations; for whether Sawtré's theology was superior to that of the divines, or was comparatively superficial, there could be no doubt of the general impression that he and his sect were a danger to civil peace. He himself is spoken of as of "execrable morals"—a judgment which may perhaps be exaggerated,[3] as the monk who penned it may have thought most of his insubordination to ecclesiastical authority. But by all accounts his bearing before the tribunal which condemned him was insolent in the extreme. "Now then," he said to the Archbishop on hearing the order for his degradation, "your malice is consummated. What further injury can you do me?"[4] By another writer it would seem that his contumacy rose still higher. "I, sent by God," he is reported to have told the Archbishop, "tell thee that thou and thy whole clergy, and the

[1] *Annales Henrici Quarti*, Henry IV. (ed. Riley), 335-6.

[2] "Attendentesque hujusmodi hæreticos in forma predicta convictos et dampnatos juxta legem divinam humanam canonica instituta et in hac parte consuetudinarie ignis incendio comburi debere" (Rymer, viii. 178; *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 459; compare Stephens' *History of the Criminal Law*, ii. 447-8.)

[3] Yet it may be noted that a year before, on the 6th February 1400, he received a pardon "for divers treasons and felonies with which he was lately charged" (*Pat. Roll*, 1 Henry IV. pt. 5, m. 16. See Calendar).

[4] *Annales Henrici Quarti, loco citato.*

King also, will shortly die an evil death, and the tongue of a foreign nation will come to bear rule in the kingdom. This is awaiting you at the door."[1] The truth is that Lollards from all parts of London were mustering in the hope of overawing Convocation; but, as this last writer remarks in another place, the Archbishop was warned, and took effectual measures for the protection of the clergy.[2] What special measures guarded the sittings of Convocation we do not know; but the final sentence and execution of Sawtré, no doubt, gave complete security, for his terrible example led at once to a number of retractations at Paul's Cross.[3]

Recantations.

Of these the most notable was that of John Purvey, who recanted on the 5th March in the same Convocation, and publicly abjured his heresies next day (which was a Sunday) at St. Paul's.[4] He had been one of Wycliffe's closest friends, and seems clearly to have been the author of the second Wycliffite translation of the Bible. He had held with his master:—(1) That there could not be in the sacrament after consecration an "accident" without a "subject," but that the bread and wine must remain in their own natures; (2) He had objected to the confessional as really entangling the human conscience in sin; (3) He had maintained that even a layman, if holy and predestined to eternal life, was a true priest competent to administer the sacraments without episcopal ordination, and that every holy priest was a bishop and prelate; (4) That prelates and clergy whose lives were opposed to the doctrine and example of Christ and His apostles had not the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but of hell, and no one should regard their excommunication more

Purvey.

[1] *Chron. Adæ de Usk* (ed. 1904), 58.

[2] *Ad. de Usk*, 4. The editorial alteration of the text from "Henrici regis *quarti*" to *quinti* seems to me quite unwarrantable.

[3] *Eulogium Historiarum*, ed. Haydon, iii. 388.

[4] Wilkins, iii. 260.

than the hissing of serpents,—nay, if even the Pope should interdict the kingdom it could do the people no hurt, but rather good, for they would thus be relieved from observing his laws and celebrating divine offices according to custom; (5) That whoever received the office of a priest, even if he had no cure of souls, not only could, but ought to preach the gospel before the people freely, otherwise he was a robber excommunicated by God from Holy Church; (6) That a vow of perpetual chastity, or any other vow, which may not be accepted by God giving him grace to perform it, is unreasonable and indiscreet; nor can any prelate bind a man to keep it unless it contravene a divine ordinance, but should commit him to the government of the Holy Spirit and of his own conscience; (7) That Innocent III. and the divines of the General Council of Lyons (of the Lateran was meant) were all fools, heretics, and blasphemers in what they decided about the sacrament of the altar and the necessity of receiving at Easter.[1]

All these heresies he now very expressly repudiated, declaring that he was not induced to do so by fear, but renounced them freely and of his own accord. We will not question his sincerity. Some of the tenets were manifestly dangerous to all rule and order in the Church; and the counter propositions which he now appended *seriatim* to the statements of his former errors were not mere negatives of their purport, but very explicit statements in themselves, the wording of which may well have

[1] Shirley's *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, 383-407. Shirley has made a curious and rather complicated mistake at page 400 as to the date of Purvey's recantation. In a footnote he corrects Bale, who assigned it to the year 1396. But he himself dates it in the margin: "Feb. 29, 1400." Now, 1400 is indeed the year as given in the record, but that is according to the old computation which began the year at Lady Day, so the historic year is 1401. Moreover, the process against Purvey only *began* on Monday, the "last" day of February, which in 1401 would be the 28th (in 1400 the 29th was not a Monday, but a Sunday); and what follows shows that the recantation only took place on the 5th March, and the abjuration at St. Paul's on the 6th as above stated.

been his own, in support of authoritative doctrine. Archbishop Arundel seems to have been satisfied that he could now do good service, and gave him in August following the vicarage of West Hythe, near his own castle of Saltwood, in Kent. But apparently he was not well at ease, for he resigned his benefice little more than two years afterwards, in October 1403. And in truth he seems to have fallen again into heresy, and to have been again imprisoned at a later period.

Another case which came before this Convocation was indeed scandalous. Robert Bowland, rector of St. Anthonine's, London, was found guilty of what was called "incest" with Alice Wodelow, a nun of Nuneaton, in Warwickshire, having got her with child when he accepted the hospitality of the nunnery at one time. He made his submission before the Synod on the 8th March, and did open penance for his crime at St. Paul's on the following Sunday.[1] We shall hear of other cases hereafter of gross moral scandals in the Church; but the important thing to note is that the Church did not look upon such cases at any time simply as a matter of course. What remedy she applied, or attempted to apply in innumerable instances, we shall never know; but wherever vice became conspicuous, as here it did by the very action of the Church in punishing it, the reproof and punishment became conspicuous also.

Offenders brought before Convocation.

After this we meet with cases of heresy brought before Convocation in October 1402, two of which ended in recantations. Another was that of a man who had already abjured heresies and "damnable private opinions," yet still maintained that the Sabbath of the Old Testament was to be observed until good reason should be shown him to the contrary; moreover, that it was unlawful to eat pork, that being the flesh of an unclean animal. The Archbishop

[1] Wilkins, iii. 262.

committed this man to the custody of the Bishop of London to be kept in the Bishop's prison till further orders. Another case dealt with was that of one who called himself a chaplain, and who had, during more than five-and-twenty years, performed various ecclesiastical functions, from that of apparitor to that of priest, celebrating divine offices in different parts of England, cohabiting all the while with a woman as his wife. As he could not be fully examined at that time he was remitted to the Archbishop's prison, and we know not what was ultimately done to him. The Convocation, after a grant to the King, presented a petition complaining that the liberties secured to the Church by an Act of 25 Edward III. had been recently violated by the arrest and trial before secular judges of divers clerks and religious men, not only on charges of treason and felony, which touched the Crown, but also of highway robbery, and that some had been put to death as common robbers. The King's answer was given by advice of Parliament. It was found that the words *Insidiatores viarum et depopulatores agrorum* had not been commonly used in indictments of the time of Edward III. or earlier, and he granted that they should not be used henceforth to debar the clergy of their privileges. Clerical lawlessness must be put under the control of clerical discipline, not of mere secular law.

In 1406 the influence of Wycliffe's teaching was still powerful at Oxford, and in October it would seem the University deemed it right to put on record their high sense of the purity of his life, the profundity of his thoughts, the gentleness of his demeanour, his constant literary labour, and his praiseworthy diligence in reading, preaching, and discussion. It was added that he had never been convicted of heretical pravity, and that the bishop had not ordered his body to be burnt after burial. Sad would it have been, indeed, if English prelates

Tribute to Wycliffe at Oxford.

had condemned as a heretic a man of so much probity who, as a writer on logic, philosophy, divinity, and morals, was in the opinion of Oxford without a peer.[1]

Such a testimonial, by the very terms in which it was drawn up, shows that it was a protest against a growing ecclesiastical feeling that Wycliffe's teaching, however honest, was answerable for much disorder. And in the turbulent beginnings of the reign of Henry IV. it was undoubtedly important that the causes of disorder should be dealt with effectually. Yet the statute for the burning of heretics had not brought peace to the Church, and only two months after the Wycliffe protest at Oxford the Lollards were the subject of a Bill in Parliament presented by the Speaker to the House of Lords on the 22nd December, and duly passed with the royal assent,[2] though not enrolled on the Statute Roll. The Prince of Wales headed the petition, which set forth that in previous reigns, when the realm had been peaceably governed, the kings had been firm in the faith and devoted to Holy Church, which had been endowed with temporal possessions by them and by temporal lords. But now some troublesome persons, both in public sermons and in conventicles, and secret places called schools, had been stirring up the people to take away the possessions of prelates and ministers of the Church, with which they were lawfully endowed, and if the designs of these persons were not resisted they would in time succeed in depriving temporal lords likewise of their possessions, which they would treat as common property, and thus raise commotions which would be the complete destruction of the kingdom. There were also persons dwelling in privileged places (*i.e.* sanctuaries) to whom

Act against the Lollards.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 302. The authenticity of this document has been disputed; but even if forged in the way alleged, viz. that the common seal was affixed to it without authority, it still goes for something. See Lyte's *Hist. of the University of Oxford*, 279.

[2] *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 583.

divers men and women resorted, and others travelled through the land trying in various ways to create dissensions between the lords spiritual and temporal and faithful lieges of the realm, publishing that Richard II. was still alive, and disseminating false prophecies of a dangerous tendency. To correct these evils it was enacted that all persons connected with such movements should be arrested without bail, except by sufficient mainprise before the Lord Chancellor for their appearance before the next Parliament, to answer and abide judgment on their conduct; and all lords spiritual and temporal, justices, and other officers, were not only empowered, but bound to arrest such persons and have them examined.

This Act has been a prolific theme of speculations on which I cannot enter.[1] But one thing is certain, that though the Act was not enrolled among the statutes, and apparently was not put into execution as enacted, commissions were issued during the two succeeding years, 9 and 10 Hen. IV., for the arrest and imprisonment of preachers of all "new and unheard of opinions contrary to the Catholic faith," and for their imprisonment till the King should give orders for their delivery.[2]

In 1407 we meet with a case of heresy which is of peculiar interest. One William Thorpe, imprisoned in the Archbishop's castle of Saltwood in Kent, was brought up before Archbishop Arundel himself, then Lord Chancellor, for examination. Our knowledge of this examination, it should be said, is derived solely from his own account of it, printed more than a century afterwards; but the account is very vivid. All laymen were ordered out of the chamber, and the examination was conducted personally by the Archbishop, assisted by his physician Malvern, parson of

William Thorpe's examination.

[1] See Hallam's *Middle Ages*, iii. 90, notes; Stubbs' *Const. Hist.*, iii. 359, 360; Ramsay's *Lancaster and York*, i. 103.

[2] See Appendix to this chapter.

St. Dunstan's in Tower Street, and two canonists. The Archbishop charged Thorpe as a vagrant preacher who had gone about disseminating false doctrine in the north and other parts of England for more than twenty years, and urged him, now that he was sequestered, to kneel down, kiss a book, and promise faithfully to submit to his direction. Thorpe asked leave, as he was taken for a heretic, to declare his belief, and he made a detailed and very orthodox confession. He hesitated, however, about taking an oath, and asked what was the object. The Archbishop said he must swear to forsake all the opinions that the Lollard sect were charged with, and promise to withstand such troublers of the Church, and declare to the bishop of the diocese the names of those whom he could not persuade to renounce their false doctrines. Moreover, he must not preach any more himself till the Archbishop was satisfied. The demand appalled him; he thought in his heart that it was "an unlawful asking," and deemed himself "cursed of God" if he consented. Being forced to reply, he told the Archbishop that if he consented he should become "an appealer, or every bishop's spy," and "summoner of all England." Many who were informed upon would rather forsake the way of truth than be troubled, scorned, slandered, or punished as men were accustomed to be by bishops and their ministers. He did not find by Scripture that such duties agreed well with a priest's functions. The Archbishop, addressing him as a "lewd losell," threatened him with the fate of Sawtré. At this he thought in his heart that God would do him a great grace if He would in mercy bring him to such an end. But he considered two things: first, that the Archbishop "was not yet sorrowful that he had made William Sawtré to be burned," and that he even thirsted for more innocent blood. He was sorry there were no laymen present, and he purposed (he says) to add no more than he

found necessary. But being still pressed to comply, he did find it necessary to give some account of himself; and his story, which contains much matter of interest, was briefly as follows:—

His father and mother had spent much money on his education in various places, with a view to make him a priest; but on coming to years of discretion he was very unwilling. They threatened him with "their curse" if he did not comply, and he obtained leave of them to consult some "that were named wise priests and of virtuous conversation," whose good works, he found, surpassed their fame; so he followed their guidance. And now, if in deference to persons less wise or virtuous he should suddenly forsake all the learning he had exercised himself in for over thirty years (that is to say, from 1377 or earlier) his conscience would be much disquieted. Yet if afterwards, through remorse, he returned to the way he was now urged to forsake, all the bishops would pursue him as a "relapse," and those who had now some confidence in him would trust him no more. He must avoid the example of men like Nicholas of Hereford, Thomas Brightwell,[1] John Purvey, and Philip of Repingdon. These were all friends and associates of Wycliffe who had recanted their heresies, and the last named had become Bishop of Lincoln. Hereford after his submission went to Rome and endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to justify before Urban VI. the sacramental doctrine that he had renounced. Purvey had received a benefice after his recantation from Archbishop Arundel himself, but resigned it two years later. By their recantations Thorpe considered that they had poisoned the Church, and

[1] The name is represented only by the initial "B" in the first publication, and Mr. Arber, in his reprint, has made it "B[owland]." I do not know his authority for this. But the document within a generation after its first publication was embodied in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*; and Foxe himself gives Brightwell as the name, not, indeed, in that English work, but in its Latin prototype (*Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum*, etc., pp. 82, 95). We have seen already that Thomas Brightwell was an early Wycliffite.

Bishop Repingdon (who was afterwards a cardinal) now persecuted Christ's people. But Thorpe had been familiar with them all in their earlier days, and believed in their earlier teaching.

The Archbishop then went into certain charges made against Thorpe at Shrewsbury, which he said were falsely imputed to him. But in the course of the examination it appeared that he had been endeavouring to enforce many of Wycliffe's ideas; as, first, that it was more important to listen to preaching than even to attend mass; (2) that he could not understand or agree to the doctrine of accidents existing without a subject; (3) that he objected to the worship of images, and to pilgrimages, which many undertook more for the health of their bodies than of their souls, singing wanton songs with piping of bagpipes and jangling of bells; (4) that he considered laymen ought not to pay tithes to priests who did not discharge their office rightly; (5) that he objected to being sworn upon a book, for that was swearing by a creature; and (6) that he thought confession to God sufficient without shrift to man. This last was a private opinion extracted from him quite recently by a man who visited him in prison as a sympathiser seeking his counsel and dissatisfied with his life at court, but whose object was to inform against him. Such, at least, is Thorpe's own statement, and if true, it is impossible to justify such double dealing.[1]

We do not know what was done with Thorpe ultimately. Foxe could not find that he was burned, but supposed that he must have ended his life in prison.[2]

[1] Thorpe's examination is printed in Foxe, iii. 250-82. It has been reprinted by Mr. Arber in his *English Garner*.

[2] Foxe's words are:—"Again, neither is it found that he was burned; therefore it remaineth most likely to be true that he, being committed to some straight prison, according as the Archbishop in his examination before did threaten him there (as Thorpe confesseth himself), was so straightly kept that either he was secretly made away with, or else he died there by sickness"

In October 1407 there was a Parliament at Gloucester, and during a brief recess at the end of November Archbishop Arundel held a provincial council of his clergy at Oxford to take measures against the spread of heresy.[1] We have just seen how strong the influence of Wycliffe's teaching still remained at his old university; and perhaps the testimonial of the year before was one reason for the selection of the place of meeting. To combat Lollard views at a place which was undoubtedly their stronghold was a measure of wise ecclesiastical policy; and the Synod did not conclude its sittings till it had enacted a set of very important constitutions. The main provisions were, that no one should take upon himself to preach without being examined by the ordinary of the place and giving formal evidence that he was authorised; that all who did preach should limit their discourses to the subjects contained in a constitution of his predecessor Archbishop Peckham, beginning *Ignorantia sacerdotum*[2]; that any one preaching before the clergy should address himself to their special vices, and any one preaching before the laity to theirs; that concerning the sacraments or articles of faith, none should preach otherwise than according to what the Church had determined, and if any one did so willingly he incurred excommunication *ipso facto*; that schoolmasters should beware of teaching children anything concerning the Catholic faith or the sacraments contrary to the determinations of the Church, or of expounding Holy Scriptures, except by such

Archbishop Arundel's Synod at Oxford.

(Foxe, iii. 285). Foxe was evidently disappointed to find no sort of proof that he was burnt, but is determined to insinuate the worst he can about his fate, building somewhat on what he curiously says that "Thorpe *confesseth* himself." In his Latin work he had put the matter somewhat differently, but very much in the same spirit:—"Sunt qui testentur (*sic*) eum eodem anno Domini 1407 in Augusto exustum, sed locum non designant; ex quo atque aliis quibusdam indiciis colligi poterit quod in privato carcere sit, vel fame, vel aliis per tortores suppliciis, archiepiscopi consilio mulctatus, *quod et verisimilius est.*" (*Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum*, 96.)

[1] Wake's *State of the Church*, 346.

[2] The text of this constitution is printed in Wilkins, ii. 54.

textual exposition as had prevailed from old times, and they must not let their scholars dispute about the faith in public or in private. Further, as new doctrines led men astray more frequently than old ones, no writings of Wycliffe must henceforth be read in schools or elsewhere, unless first examined by the University of Oxford or of Cambridge, or at least by twelve persons chosen by them.

Then, as it was a dangerous thing—in which St. Jerome himself, though inspired, confessed that he had sometimes gone wrong—to translate Holy Scripture out of one language into another, for the true sense was not easily preserved, no one was henceforth to translate any text of Scripture into English or other tongue by way of book, booklet, or tract, or to read any such made in the time of the said John Wycliffe or later, unless it was approved by the diocesan of the place or, if the case required, by a provincial council. Some other provisions were added to avoid needless and dangerous disputations, and for monthly examinations by the heads of colleges at Oxford to check the promulgation of any but necessary doctrine.[1]

These constitutions, which were only published in 1409 after being confirmed in another council held at St. Paul's,[2] were well devised, and seem to have been effective for their general purpose. It is a curious reflection, no doubt, on the scholarship of the time, that in the preamble St. Peter's name of *Cephas* (the Hebrew word for "a stone") is interpreted as meaning "head," by confusion with the Greek word κεφαλή.[3] But learning was certainly on the decline, and Greek was little known in Europe before the fall of Constantinople. The organisation of the Church throughout Christendom, moreover,

[1] Wilkins, iii. 314-19.
[2] Wilkins, *loc. cit.* Wake, p. 347.
[3] The same error occurs in Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 434, 437. It was evidently very widespread.

was at this time paralysed by a thirty years' Schism in the Papacy, which men were hoping at last to heal by a General Council; and such a council, in truth, not only met at Pisa this very year, but deposed two rival popes and caused a third to be elected. Yet as the so-called Benedict XIII. refused to submit, the Schism still continued till the Council of Constance in 1415, and even for some years later, as we shall see hereafter. Meanwhile the Church in England was doing its best; and the constitutions of Archbishop Arundel in 1409 form an important turning-point in the religious history of the period.

Importance of his constitutions.

From that year, in fact, there is no doubt that order was getting gradually strengthened in the Church, and that the confusions of the bygone age were disappearing. For some years we hardly meet with any clergyman burned for heresy after Sawtré; for the clergy generally were brought into tolerable discipline through Archbishop Arundel's constitutions. They were made responsible to their bishops; they could not wander from one diocese to another, and they could not preach without being regularly licensed.[1] If any did, it must be by the support of some powerful knight or nobleman. But this was still possible; and the next combat of the Church was accordingly with laymen of high standing. For from the days of John of Gaunt, Wycliffe and his followers had enjoyed to a considerable extent the favour of such persons. It was thankfully confessed by Wycliffe himself that knights favoured the gospel;[2] and, as we have seen already, his supporters were both numerous and powerful.

[1] In 1415, at the Council of Constance, an English member expressed himself thus: "In Anglia omnes magistri qui suspecti fuerunt de opinione Wicleff, omnes secundum ordinem ex mandato archiepiscopi abjuraverunt" (Palacky, 136, cited by Loserth, ii. 303).

[2] "But oo confort is of knyztti's that thei savoren myche the gospel and han wille to rede in Englishe the gospel of Cristis liif" (Arnold's *Select English Works of Wyclif*, i. 209).

Even now, a quarter of a century after his death, there can be no doubt that his followers had the good-will of a large number of influential persons, who could not have loved the steps taken by the bishops to keep their flocks in subjection. For in 1410 there was an unpleasant rumour that the knights in Parliament, or some of them at least, designed to urge upon the King a grand measure for the spoliation of the Church. The official records of Parliament are silent about this; it only appears from them that the Commons prayed for a modification of the statute against heretics and for confiscation of half the revenues of absentee incumbents and pluralists, and of benefices appropriated by untrue suggestions.[1] But it would seem that much more was proposed by some; for the monastic chronicler of St. Albans records that the knights of shires — the *milites parliamentales*, whom he would rather call *satellites Pilatales*—presented a bill to the King suggesting a very large confiscation. The King, it was alleged, might have of the goods enjoyed and wasted in their pride by bishops, abbots, and priors, enough to maintain fifteen earls, 1500 knights, 6200 esquires, and 100 almshouses.[2] And the exact text of the petition, which has been preserved in an English city chronicle, says, that after all this, £20,000 and more would remain to go into the King's own coffers.[3] But when the petitioners were called upon to show from what specific sources those great sums were to be obtained the investigation failed, and the King administered a severe rebuke to the petitioners.

Proposed confiscation of Church property.

If such was the issue of the affair we need not

[1] *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 626, 645.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 282-3.

[3] Fabyan. Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, 65, where the Parliament in which the Bill was put up is said to have been holden in the eighth year of Henry IV. (1407), which seems to be a mistake. The text as printed by Kingsford from the Cottonian MS. Julius II. shows that the scheme was a most elaborate one.

wonder that there was no mention of it in any official record. Wycliffe would have favoured disendowment of the clergy with a view to make the Church more spiritually minded. Others were quite ready to take up the idea in the secular interests of the commonwealth. If such a policy was to prevail it was no doubt high time to strike the blow. The complete subordination, even of the clergy, admitted in theory by the Archbishop's victory at Oxford, was by no means yet assured. Even at Oxford Arundel's constitutions had not been submitted to without a certain degree of resistance; and some of the Faculties refused to concur in the nomination of the twelve censors who were to examine the writings of Wycliffe and his contemporaries before allowing them to be read in the schools. After some heated correspondence, however, not only were the censors elected, but before the end of the year they had issued a report condemning no less than 267 propositions found in Wycliffe's writings.[1] In the preamble to this lengthy document, it should be noted, the writers speak of it as a constant tendency of heretics to lean too much on the literal sense of Scripture and despise the metaphorical; and they further show that the new schools were dangerous, because when they could not conquer their opponents in argument they cunningly appealed to the secular arm to protect them while shaking the pillars of the Christian faith.[2]

Assertions such as these deserve some little consideration from historians. It has been far too generally assumed by Protestants that heretics before the Reformation were the children of light, confuting the errors of Romanism and preparing the way for a new and brighter age by their superior wisdom and independence of judgment. The complaint of their adversaries was just the contrary—that they took

[1] Lyte's *History of the University of Oxford*, pp. 282-3.
[2] Wilkins, iii. 339.

Character of Lollardy.

slavish views of the literal sense of Scripture, and that when arguments failed them, they were quite ready to call in secular aid to justify themselves in maintaining their own positions. I think, moreover, that the candid student of pre-Reformation history will hardly be of opinion that Lollardy was productive of skilled dialecticians capable of overthrowing in logical combat the positions which had been established by the great divines and schoolmen of past ages. Wycliffe himself, indeed, was a genuine schoolman, and ought never to be reckoned as a heretic, whatever may be thought of his conclusions; for there is no appearance that he had advanced any of his opinions—not even his difficulty about transubstantiation—without deference to the possible judgment of a united Church pronounced when all his arguments had been heard. He was a highly trained divine, fully entitled to hold his own until his reasonings had been confuted. But this could not be said of many who caught his fire and maintained his most dangerous opinions without being entitled to speak as divines or capable of vindicating them by argument.

The Archbishop acted on the report of the censors at Oxford, and laid the case of Wycliffe and his followers before Pope John XXIII.,[1]—the case which was brought before the Council of Constance only a few years later. Meanwhile it was clear enough that heresy would receive no encouragement from Henry IV., as indeed it never did from any king after him till the days of Henry VIII. Confiscation of the goods of the clergy was not really in the interest of the Crown, as the King could always get them to vote him in Convocation whatever money aid he required, and the Church was otherwise a great support of the throne. The knights in this Parliament did not receive very encouraging replies even to their more

[1] Wilkins, iii. 350.

moderate petitions on Church matters, but were referred, for the most part, to the common law or to existing statutes; and the jurisdiction of the Church was distinctly recognised. In fact, it must have already been apparent that Lollardy meant anarchy, and if there were influential knights who favoured it the Sovereign was all the more interested in keeping it down.

No knight, however, had as yet by his personal actions brought down upon himself a prosecution for heresy; or rather, whatever his personal conduct may have been, it was dangerous to move the spiritual law against a man of knightly standing. The severity of that law fell upon a poor tailor of Evesham named John Badby, who in Lent 1410 was burned in Smithfield during this same session of Parliament, and his end was pitiable in the extreme. He had been pronounced a heretic by the Diocesan Court at Worcester more than a year before, but was allowed a year for reflection, and after fourteen months he was brought before Convocation at London. He would not believe in the power of a priest to make the body of Christ, and he adhered to his opinion. The Archbishop did his utmost to exhort him to recant, but he remained obdurate and contemptuous. He said the bread was worse than a toad or a spider, which were living things; and when asked in public what he would have said had he been with Christ at the supper, and heard Him speak the words, "This is my body," he replied that he would have said Christ himself had spoken falsely. He was brought to Smithfield and put in a barrel. Prince Henry was present, and urged him even then to recant, but he still refused. The fire was applied, and his cries were terrible, on which the Prince made one more effort to save him. He ordered the burning material to be removed, and when the poor wretch was somewhat recovered, promised him life and pardon and threepence a day if

Badby, the tailor, burnt.

he would then conform. But having recovered his spirit he again refused, on which he was once more shut up in the barrel and burnt to ashes.[1]

This was but the second victim of a severe law, now ten years old, which the King had just refused to modify at the request of the Commons. Humanity was not dead in those days any more than it is in ours; but no one doubted that order must be vindicated in the Church as in the realm. To pass a law deemed necessary for the very highest reasons, and to refuse to execute it against an extreme opponent, would have been to undo all that the law was supposed to effect or had effected. But the execution was unspeakably sad, and perhaps the saddest part of it was the way it was regarded. That a poor tailor's unrefined common sense should have nerved him with courage to die in the conviction that he was right in defiance of the judgments of all the most learned divines is surely a fact that calls for sympathy as well as wonder. But the age believed in spirits, good and evil, and, when all was over, could only attribute his perversity to a very evil spirit. Alas! coercion is not the way to conquer evil spirits, but to make them more perverse; and if men are subdued by the spirit of fear it is not much better than being moved by the spirit of audacity.

Such poor heretics as Badby proved but feeble obstacles to the more effective government of the Church. But the influence of some powerful knight or nobleman leaning to heresy was a much more serious matter, for under the protection of such a one the clergy themselves might defy episcopal authority. And about this very time a chaplain of Sir John

[1] See Wylie, iii. 437-40; Ramsay, i. 125-6, where the original authorities are cited. Occleve refers to Badby's case in his poem *De Regimine Principum*, 11, 12, with great commendation of the Prince's solicitude to save him. Henry certainly was as humane as feeling for the law permitted. On his accession to the throne in 1413 he restored to the widows of various heretics who had recently suffered all the forfeited goods and chattels of their husbands. See Tyler's *Henry of Monmouth*, ii. 413.

Oldcastle was causing considerable trouble. Sir John was a knight of Herefordshire who had done good service to the King in the Welsh marches and in the Scottish war, and having lately married the heiress of the Cobham family, was now admitted to a seat in the House of Lords, but apparently only by the title of Oldcastle, though he was often called Lord Cobham as in right of his wife. Of this marriage, which of course had been arranged on feudal principles with due consideration to property qualifications, some circumstances may be noted, not perhaps of so unusual a character in mediæval times as in our own. Oldcastle himself had been twice married already, and had one son by his first wife and three daughters by his second, while his bride had been three times married before, though she only brought him one stepdaughter, as two other children had died. She brought him, however, a considerable amount of landed property in Kent, with some other scattered manors in Norfolk, Northamptonshire, and Wiltshire, in addition to his own lands in Herefordshire. He also acquired by her a town house called Cobham's Inn in the city of London.

Sir John Oldcastle.

His chaplain[1] not only preached without licence, in defiance of Archbishop Arundel's constitutions, in the churches of Hoo, Halstow, and Cooling in Kent, but mixed up "tares and heresies" with his preaching. The Archbishop met this with a mandate to the Dean of Rochester to intimate that the churches were interdicted, and if it was found dangerous to arrest the chaplain, who was skulking about, to post copies on the doors of the neighbouring churches, of a citation requiring him to appear before the Archbishop twelve days later to show cause why he should not be canonically punished. But the second day after issuing this mandate the Archbishop was notified that a marriage had been arranged to take place in Cooling church

Three churches in Kent interdicted.

[1] Not, I think, John Lay, soon to be mentioned, who was of Nottingham.

three days later between Sir Thomas Brooke, a knight of Somersetshire, and a lady who is described as the daughter and heir of Lady Cobham, that is to say, the heiress apparent of Oldcastle's existing wife.[1] He accordingly, out of regard to the nobility of both parties, relaxed the interdict, so far as Cooling church was concerned, for the three days following, in order that the celebration might take place. Afterwards, at the earnest suit of the bridegroom, and out of regard for Lady Cobham, he relaxed it altogether, but only under the condition that the rector with some of his parishioners should appear before him the next time he came into those parts and submit to a mild correction.[2] The discipline of the Church had evidently triumphed, and the Kentish clergy, at least, had a warning not to let their churches be used by heretics, even to please great people.

Convocation and heresy.

Three years later, when Henry IV. was on his deathbed, the Convocation of Canterbury met at St. Paul's on the 6th March 1413, when it was reported to the Archbishop's registrar that a chaplain was present in the church who was gravely suspected of heretical pravity (that was the expression), and that two unknown men were in his company. There was surely some dangerous electricity in the air when such things could be noted. The chaplain was immediately sent for, and replied to the interrogations addressed to him that he came from Nottingham, where he commonly celebrated in the church of St. Mary; that his name was John Lay, and that he was born in the diocese of Lincoln; that he had been two days in the city, and had that day celebrated before Lord Cobham. Of the two men with him he knew one, but did not know the name of either. Being asked for his letters of ordination and his *literæ commendatitiæ*, he said he had them not at hand.

[1] See G. E. C.'s *Complete Peerage*, ii. 317, 318; vi. 119.
[2] Wilkins, iii. 329-31.

He was allowed till Saturday following to produce them, and to declare, if he could, the names of the two men, and where they dwelt, under pain of the greater excommunication. But what became of this particular case we do not know precisely. The King died just a fortnight later, and the Archbishop, much occupied with the affairs of Parliament (for a new Parliament met on the 14th May), was obliged to adjourn the Convocation continually from day to day till Wednesday, the 6th June. So, at least, it stands upon the record, but the 6th June that year was a Tuesday, and apparently Wednesday, the 7th, was meant, on which day the prelates and clergy assembled at Lambeth, and condemned certain treatises containing heretical conclusions. The Archbishop himself read the sentence; and the names of the treatises, with over three hundred of the worst conclusions, were quoted at length. They have not, however, been copied in Arundel's Register, though a blank space has been left for their insertion, which was never filled up.[1]

The treatises were burnt in St. Paul's Churchyard, the Archbishop declaring the reasons for it to the people. Convocation was then further prorogued till the Monday after Corpus Christi Day—that is, till the 26th June—when the Bishop of London (Richard Clifford) was deputed by the Archbishop to preside for him. A supplication was handed in by the clergy suggesting various reforms. Among others was one to put a stop to preaching without licence by making the offence involve, not only the preachers, but all who adhered to them or in any way assisted them, in the sentence of greater excommunication *ipso facto*. It was also desired, to prevent evasions of the Oxford constitution which were practised in several places,

Measures against unlicensed preaching.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 338. I am informed by Mr. W. T. Waugh that the account of the opening of this Convocation in Wilkins is very defective, even before the part relating to John Lay, and that there were various sittings between March and June of which Wilkins takes no notice, though it is clear that some business was done at them.

that unlicensed preaching, whether in the church or churchyard, or elsewhere within the limits of any particular parish, should be declared to involve not only the church and churchyard, but the whole parish in the sentence of interdict *ipso facto*. Such measures would naturally be a most effectual check on the propagation of heresy by preaching.

A particular quest now occupied attention. Among the burnt treatises two were noticed as particularly bad. One was in sheets not bound, containing several small tracts of a most dangerous kind tending to the subversion of the faith. It belonged to Sir John Oldcastle, and had been found with a "lymnore" in Paternoster Row, with whom it had been left to be illuminated. The limner told whose book it was. The other treatise came from Coventry—a special nest of heresy, but, full of poisons as it was said to be, it had no particular history. It was otherwise with Oldcastle's book, which was such a serious matter that "almost all the prelates and nobles of England" went to the King in a body at Kennington, where he received them in an inner chamber, to declare its mischievous character in the presence of Oldcastle himself, who was specially summoned to attend. The King expressed his detestation of the contents of the book as containing the worst conclusions he had ever heard against the faith of the Church, and asked Oldcastle whether he did not think it worthily condemned. Oldcastle confessed that he did, and being asked why he used it, or had it, he said he had never used it or read more than two leaves of it.[1]

A book belonging to Oldcastle;

The excuse went for very little. It could not have been by mere inadvertence that he was the owner of such an objectionable book when he was going to have had it illuminated. It was found by the clergy in that same Convocation that there were evil reports of him

[1] Wilkins, iii. 351, 352.

up and down the country, and that in several dioceses he had asserted and defended heretical conclusions. He had also received and encouraged chaplains who favoured such errors, and had sent them to various places to preach without being licensed by their ordinaries, in defiance of the provincial constitution. He had been present himself at their wicked preachings, and had terrified opponents by the power of the secular sword; and he thought, dogmatised, and taught otherwise than the Church did about the sacrament of the altar, penance, pilgrimages, the worship of images, and the keys. In fact, he was the principal protector of Lollards, especially in the dioceses of Rochester and Hereford; and Convocation declared that "it was almost impossible to repair the rent of the seamless garment of our Lord unless first certain great men of the kingdom who were authors, favorers, defenders, and receivers of those heretics were severely reproved, and if necessary revoked from their waywardness by the invocation of the secular arm." They accordingly urged the Archbishop to proceed against Oldcastle; but for reverence of the King, whose familiar servant he was, and for the honour of knighthood, the Primate with his suffragans and a great part of the clergy again resorted to the King's presence at Kennington to represent the matter before taking further steps.[1]

who is found to be the chief protector of Lollards.

The King asked the Archbishop's forbearance till he had used his own powers of persuasion with Oldcastle to bring him back to the unity of the Church; and the Archbishop acquiesced, not without some murmuring on the part of his clergy, who, of course, thought this was not a function even for the highest secular authority. The King's labour, however, was fruitless. He found Oldcastle altogether incorrigible and rebuked him severely for his pertinacity. This was in August, at Windsor; and Oldcastle, "full of

[1] Wilkins, iii. 352, 353.

the devil," as the record says, withdrew without leave to his own castle at Cooling. The King then sent for the Archbishop, who was at Chichester celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin (August 15), and, meeting him when he came in Windsor Park, ordered him now to proceed against the knight with all celerity. The Archbishop, accordingly, sent a citation to Oldcastle, at Cooling, where he had shut himself up, giving orders to the messenger not to enter the castle without leave, but to make request through John Butler, usher of the King's chamber, either that he might be permitted to enter in order to serve the citation, or that Oldcastle would allow himself to be arrested outside. But even to the King's usher Oldcastle openly replied that he refused to be cited in any way. The Archbishop, accordingly, determined to cite him by an edict posted on the door of Rochester Cathedral, only three miles from Cooling (as miles were reckoned then), to appear before him on the 11th September. On that day the Archbishop, sitting in judgment at Leeds, being certified that Oldcastle still shut himself up in his castle, where he was fortifying himself against attack, and defended his opinions, despising the power of the keys, declared him publicly contumacious, and then excommunicated him, ordering him to be again cited, either personally or by edict as before, to appear before him on the Saturday after St. Matthew's Day following, that is to say, on the 23rd September, to show cause why he should not be proceeded against *ad graviora*.[1]

He refuses to be cited.

It seems to have been a life-and-death struggle between established order and heresy. The Lollards were strong in London, and had lately affixed placards to the doors of the London churches magnifying their

[1] Wilkins, iii. 353, 354. The matter is contained in two separate records, the latter of which is likewise printed in Shirley's *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, 433-450.

own strength, and declaring that a hundred thousand men were ready to rise against all those who opposed their religion. The number was, of course, preposterous, but dangerous things were hatching. Nor was it any secret that the hope and trust of the disaffected reposed in the territorial power of Sir John Oldcastle.[1]

On the appointed day the Archbishop presided over a court at the chapter-house of St. Paul's, with the Bishops of London and Winchester as his assessors, and Oldcastle appeared before him in the custody of Sir Robert Morley, Constable of the Tower. How he came to be a prisoner is not expressly shown, except that a London chronicler[2] says that he was arrested at Windsor and sent to the Tower. If so, it was apparently after he had sought another interview with the King, in which he proposed to clear himself of heresy by single combat or by the purgation of a hundred knights and esquires; for this is what Bale tells us in his *Brief Chronicle* on the authority of some old manuscript now unknown. He had first, however, according to the same authority, wished to lay before the King a confession of his faith, which Henry, very properly, refused to receive, telling him to deliver it to his ecclesiastical judges; and, finally, he showed a copy of an appeal to the Pope which he was prepared to prosecute, but the King forbade this also while his case was pending before the Archbishop. So on the 23rd September he was brought before the spiritual court in the keeping of the Constable of the Tower. The Archbishop then related to him gently the whole story of the proceedings against him, and offered to absolve him. But he took no notice of the offer, and said he would declare the faith which he held. This he obtained leave to read

He is brought in custody before a spiritual court.

[1] Walsingham, ii. 291. It is not quite easy to fix the time of year intended by *eo tempore*, but the chronicler undoubtedly means sometime in the summer or autumn of 1413.

[2] *Collections of a London Citizen*, 107 (Camden Soc.).

at full length from a writing which he took from his bosom. It was quite an unobjectionable declaration so far as it went, even confessing the sacrament of the altar to be the very body of Christ in the form of bread—the same body that was born of the Virgin, died on the cross, and rose again. There was room for suspicion, however, even on this head; while there were further statements of belief as to penance, images, and pilgrimages which could not exactly be taxed as unsound, but left something to be desired. He was accordingly called on to answer whether he held that the material bread remained after consecration, and whether in the sacrament of penance confession of sins to an ordained priest was necessary. On these points he declined to speak more definitely than he had done in the confession. The Archbishop then took counsel with his assessors, and declared to him some determinations of the Church which all Catholics ought to observe. Oldcastle replied that he was willing to observe whatever Holy Church had determined and whatever God wished him to believe; but that the Pope, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops had the power of determining such things he would not then in any way affirm.

The judges evidently showed great patience; but it was their duty to bring the wanderer back to the fold if possible. They promised to send him an English translation of the determinations in question that he might understand them the better, which was actually delivered to him next day, Sunday; and he was asked to consider them and make a full answer on Monday the 25th. On that day, accordingly, the Constable of the Tower brought him again before the court, which was now assembled at the Blackfriars,[1] and he was urged to seek in due form the Church's absolution. He replied that he would ask no absolu-

[1] See Mr. Waugh's first article on Oldcastle in *English Historical Review*, xx. 453.

tion of the court, but only of God. Being then asked his opinion of the separate articles, he replied :— First about the Eucharist, as Christ when he lived on earth had in himself both divinity and humanity, yet a divinity veiled and invisible under his humanity which was open and visible, so in the sacrament of the altar is a true body and true bread,—the bread, that is to say, which we see, and the body of Christ veiled under it which we do not see. And he expressly denied that the faith touching this sacrament laid before him as that of the Church of Rome and holy doctors, could be the determination of the Church ; but if it was so, he said it had been determined against Scripture, and after the Church was endowed and infected with poison. He declares his opinions.

As to the sacrament of penance and confession, he said that if any one was in a grave state of sin from which he could not liberate himself it would be well for him to take counsel of a holy and discreet priest. But to confess his sin to his own curate, or to another priest, in case he had the curate's leave, was not necessary to salvation ; because such sin might be extinguished by contrition only, and the sinner himself purged.

As to the adoration of the Holy Cross, he said that only the body of Christ which hung upon the cross ought to be adored, because that body alone was and is the cross to be adored. And being asked what honour he would pay to the image on that Cross, he expressly replied that he would only do it the honour to clean it and put it in good custody.

As to the power of the keys and of the Pope, archbishops, bishops, and prelates, he said that the Pope was very Antichrist, that is, the head of it ; the archbishops, bishops, and other prelates the members, and the friars the tail. No obedience was due to the Pope, archbishops, and prelates, except so far as they were imitators of Christ and Peter in life, morals, and

conversation; and he and no other was the successor of Peter who was the best in life and purest in morals.

With this he addressed the bystanders with a loud voice and hands extended: "Those who judge and mean to condemn me will seduce you all and themselves also, and will lead you to hell. Therefore beware of them!"

The judges were pained and addressed him sadly, using all possible exhortations to induce him to return to the unity of the Church, and believe and hold what the Church of Rome held. But he answered expressly that he would not believe or hold otherwise than he had said. There was nothing left but to give definitive sentence, which was finally done. He was thus declared excommunicated and was handed over to the secular power; and the Archbishop, by a letter dated at Maidstone on the 10th October, ordered the sentence to be read in every church in his province, that men might be warned against showing him any favour.[1]

Declared excommunicated.

We have been following the official records of the process almost word for word, for the case of such a distinguished person being condemned for heresy was unprecedented. After passing the sentence, according to one chronicler, the Archbishop himself interceded with the King that execution should be delayed till after forty days' imprisonment in the Tower, in the hope that even yet the offender might recant.[2] But this hope proved vain. One thing, indeed, may have seemed to favour it, that after a while he actually promised what was desired of him, but it was only for a purpose. For having at first been confined in chains he was afterwards relieved of them on a promise that he would revoke his heretical opinions and stand to the judgment of the Church. But before a meeting

[1] Wilkins iii. 354-7; *Fasc. Zizan.*, pp. 437-50.
[2] Walsingham, ii. 296.

of the clergy could be convoked to receive his submission he contrived to escape.[1] Whether his keepers were bribed or circumvented, the King, who would fain have hushed the matter up, was obliged by and by to issue a proclamation against harbouring the fugitive. In December the Primate, after a meeting with his suffragans at St. Paul's, excommunicated Oldcastle and his adherents at Paul's Cross. There is no doubt the chroniclers are right, that he was at this time by secret emissaries organising a formidable outbreak which was to take place soon after the new year;[2] and on Twelfth Day the King at Eltham had news that Sir John Oldcastle was up and was coming against him with a strong body of adherents.[3] A number of lords, both spiritual and temporal, had been spending the Christmas season with the King; yet a night attack upon the Court had been planned, and was revealed only by the timidity of some of the conspirators.[4] The plan was "to have made a mumming at Eltham," as if for the entertainment of the Court, "and under colour of the mumming to have destroyed the King and Holy Church." So the matter was regarded. But orders were at once sent to the Mayor of London, William Crowmer, for the arrest of suspicious persons, and the conspirators were secured at the Axe, outside Bishopsgate, before they had set out upon their journey.[5]

He escapes from the Tower,

and conspires against the Court.

[1] *Henrici Quinti Gesta*, pp. 3, 4. The form of abjuration contained in *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, 414-16, may or may not have been submitted to Oldcastle when he was in the Tower; but that he had substantially agreed to its contents before he was released from his fetters I see no reason to doubt. Bale denounced it as a forgery, which it would have been if the clergy had given out that he had signed it; but apparently it was only a draft of what he was expected to declare on a further appearance before a clerical tribunal. In it he is made to say that he has at length come to his senses and hopes to avoid temporal punishment at the hands of the King.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 297; *Henrici Quinti Gesta* (ed. Williams), p. 4.

[3] *Chronicle of London* (ed. Nicolas), p. 97.

[4] Walsingham, ii. 297.

[5] Gregory's *Chronicle*, 108 (in *Collections of a London Citizen*, edited by me for the Camden Society); Stowe's *Chronicle*, 344. The day on which the design was to have been accomplished was doubtless Tuesday the 9th, when the great musters from the country were to have arrived in the neighbourhood

A night muster in St. Giles's planned.

Fuller information was obtained from the prisoners about Oldcastle's designs. He had arranged for a great muster to take place at night in St. Giles's fields on Tuesday the 9th. His friend, Sir Roger Acton of Shropshire, was to be there also. "You might see the crowds," writes Walsingham, "drawn by great promises, hastening along by footpaths, through villages, by crossways, from almost every county of the kingdom, to join together at the day and hour now at hand. And when asked why they thus hurried and ran themselves almost out of breath, they answered that they were hastening on to join Lord Cobham, who had sent for them and retained them in wages."[1] But the King had been quietly preparing for this great outbreak. A proclamation against illicit meetings which he had sent orders to the sheriffs to publish was no doubt too belated to be of much effect.[2] But on Monday the 8th he removed from Eltham to London, "and with him came his brethren and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Courtenay, the Bishop of Norwich, and many other lords and bachelors."[3] In London, however, the King only gave directions to the authorities and passed on to Westminster, where he matured his plans for opposing the rebels.

That Tuesday night following, when the muster was to take place, the King ordered the gates of the city to be shut and closely guarded with armed men, who allowed none to pass out except those who were to join the King's troops. At night he held a council of war at Westminster, having ordered his men to be ready under arms. The danger was known. Oldcastle sought the King's overthrow. It was reported,

of London; but the disguised mummers would presumably have gone to Eltham on Twelfth Night, the very night that they were arrested, to take preliminary observations of the Court.

[1] Walsingham, ii. 298.

[2] Waugh in *Engl. Hist. Rev.*, xx. 640.

[3] *Chronicle of London* (ed. Nicolas), p. 97.

besides, that the rebels designed to destroy the monasteries of Westminster and St. Albans, St. Paul's Cathedral, and all the vicars' houses; and really, unless some very serious objects were in contemplation, it was difficult to say what they came for. The King proposed at once to go out in the night to meet the enemy. Some counselled delay till daylight, when friends and foes could be easily distinguished; others suggested the advisability of waiting till he had gathered a larger army. But the King would not hear of delay, and against the general wish set off to the field soon after midnight with his men. His policy was successful, for, assisted, as it would seem, by some flashes of lightning to discover the enemy,[1] he took the rebels by surprise. Many of them, coming from afar, fell into the King's camp by mistake, and being asked what they wanted, said they were seeking for their master, Lord Cobham. They were at once taken prisoners, and the whole host were struck with dismay, especially on finding that they were not joined by the thousands whom they expected from the city. Those who were not captured took to flight, and some were taken in the pursuit and killed.[2] Defeated.

A reward of no less than a thousand marks was offered for the capture of Oldcastle himself, or five hundred marks to any one giving information which should lead to it.[3] But even these immense bribes, equivalent probably to about £10,000 and £5000 of modern currency in value, failed to seduce any one who knew of his hiding-place to betray him. Freedom from taxation was also offered by the proclamation to any city or borough which would secure him. His followers meanwhile suffered in his absence. A judicial commission was at once appointed for Middlesex, and

[1] Elmham's "Liber Metricus," in Cole's *Memorials of Henry V.*, 99.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 298. The chronicler estimates that, but for the measures taken, 50,000 would have joined them from the city. We must, of course, allow for much exaggeration.

[3] Rymer, ix. 89.

Indictment found.

next day for other counties for the trial of those implicated, and an indictment was found on the 11th January against Sir John Oldcastle for conspiring to kill the King, his brothers, the prelates, and other magnates of the realm, his object being, as it was alleged, by the aid of his Lollard followers, to get himself made regent, put down royal state and the office of prelates, abolish religious orders, force the monks to apply themselves to secular occupations, and plunder and level to the ground cathedral and other churches.[1] A most revolutionary scheme, doubtless! But we must not dismiss it as mere fable or call it absolute infatuation without thinking of the extremely unsettled state of things which had prevailed both under Richard II. and under Henry IV., and the doubts that might well have been entertained whether the supposed madcap young prince who had just succeeded was the man to control the forces of disorder. The Wycliffe leaven had long been working in Oldcastle, who even in 1410 had been corresponding with Hus and his followers in Bohemia;[2] and in Wycliffe's eyes the religious orders had been nothing less than a brood of evildoers who ought to be put down. That revolutionary notions, even of an extreme kind, had been fermenting in some minds at this period there seems no reason to doubt; and if one such mind was that of a knight whose temporal possessions gave him the command of a large number of followers, the result would quite naturally be very dangerous to the peace of the country. Oldcastle's designs were undoubtedly so regarded, and that any other view of them was taken till the days of Queen Elizabeth there is no evidence to show.

The law was now put in force. Oldcastle himself could not be found, though a writ was issued to the Sheriff of Middlesex to bring him before the King at

[1] *Rolls of Parl.*, iv. 108.
[2] See Wylie's *Henry IV.*, vol. iii. 298.

Westminster. But there was no difficulty in dealing with his followers, many of whom were speedily tried and condemned. Thirty-eight were taken back to St. Giles's Fields, where four pair of gallows were made for them, called the Lollards' gallows. Some were simply hanged as traitors ; but a certain number were not only so hanged, but also burned as heretics, the gallows, too, being burned along with them. Sir Roger Acton was taken a little later, and (after trial, presumably) was dragged through the streets to St. Giles's likewise, where he was hanged, and, while still breathing, thrown into the fire.[1] But the King showed great desire to be lenient and admitted many to pardon. The people had been grievously deluded, even in believing that a great revolution was possible. Their trust in Oldcastle certainly was wonderful. A brewer of Dunstable had apparently expected to receive knighthood from him on his triumph, for when he was taken there were found in his possession a pair of gilt spurs which he had concealed in his bosom, and two war-horses with gold trappings.[2]

Executions of Oldcastle's followers.

The rising being now put down, a Parliament met at Leicester on the 30th April. It is very remarkable that it should have been summoned to meet in a place which had hitherto been a hotbed of Lollardy —the very centre of Swinderby's first activity, and the county town of Wycliffe himself as incumbent of Lutterworth, which was only some twelve miles from it. Here, however, Parliament held a session that spring, which passed a new enactment against Lollardy in consequence of the recent confederacies made, as it was declared, "to annul and subvert the

[1] This last detail is given by Redman (see *Memorials of Henry V.*, ed. C. A. Cole, 23). For other matters I refer the reader to Mr. Waugh's second article (*English Historical Review*, xx.), most of the statements in which I have tested myself. I do not quite agree with all Mr. Waugh's comments, but his research is very valuable, especially as it is not limited to printed sources.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 299.

Christian faith and the law of God within this realm," as well as to destroy the King "and all other manner of estates, as well spiritual as temporal, . . . and finally the laws of the land." We may interpret preambles to Acts of Parliament as we think most in accordance with probabilities; but language like this, so frequently repeated at the time, must be held of some account by the historian.

Statutes passed at Leicester.

The enactment was that, for the future, the Lord Chancellor, judges, justices of the peace, sheriffs, mayors, and all other officers, should take an oath to put down all kinds of "heresies and errors, commonly called Lollardies," within their jurisdictions; and to assist the ordinaries and their commissaries by riding to arrest Lollards when requested. Persons convicted of heresy and handed over to the secular power were to forfeit all their lands. Justices of the King's bench, justices of the peace, and justices of assize, were empowered to inquire of all heretics who were their maintainers, to award a *capias* against them, and have them delivered to the ordinaries within ten days of their arrest to be tried by the laws of Holy Church.[1] Another Act immediately followed to strengthen a previous enactment against riots.[2]

These enactments, no doubt, contributed much to the peace of the country. Yet it was still a question whether the Lancastrian throne was safe, and whether revolutionary tendencies could be effectually kept down. The King was at Southampton in summer on the point of sailing for Normandy for his first victorious campaign in France, when the plot of the Earl of Cambridge and Lord Scrope of Masham was discovered. This was speedily punished under a special commission, the Earl himself and Sir Thomas Grey confessing their guilt. But the King had no sooner sailed than the Lollards emerged from their hiding-places and stirred up sedition, placing writings

Disturbances after the King went abroad.

[1] Statute, 2 Henry V. c. 7.

[2] *Ibid.* c. 8.

again on London church doors, with exhortations to avenge their wrongs, now that "the prince of priests," as they called him, was gone. And Oldcastle himself, deceived by a premature report that the King had crossed, had already ventured from his hiding-place, which was near Malvern, and threatened Lord Abergavenny at his castle of Hanley. But this lord, having got warning in the night time, sent immediate orders to his retainers about Worcester, Pershore, and Tewkesbury, to come to him in the early morning at Hanley Castle, and Oldcastle, finding that his enemy was quite prepared for him, retired and hid himself once more. But a priest of his, and some other of his followers, were taken, who, on being questioned, revealed the secret place where he kept his stores of arms and money. There his ensigns were found, with one banner, on which he had got painted conspicuously a chalice and a host, and others, whereon were displayed the cross of Christ, with those emblems of His passion,—the scourges, spear, and nails,—all intended to impose on the simplicity of the people if he could have found an opportunity to raise a new rebellion, for nothing was more opposed to the true spirit of Lollardy than images and paintings like these. Hearing, however, of the executions of the Earl of Cambridge and Lord Scrope at Southampton, he had little desire to lay himself open to the like punishment.[1]

The spirit of knighthood itself was felt to have been dishonoured by Oldcastle and by other treason-mongers as well. It was while the King was at Southampton about to embark that Occleve composed, in a poem of sixty-four stanzas, not a railing, but a sad appeal to Oldcastle as one of whom better things had been expected. And to any one who would understand the religious and political feelings of the time this poem is indispensable. Near the beginning we read :—

Occleve's appeal to Oldcastle.

[1] Walsingham, ii. 306-7.

Allas, that thou that wer a manly knyght
And shoon ful cleer in famous worthynesse,
Standynge in the fauour of every wight
Haast lost the style of cristenly prowesse
Among alle hem that stande in the cleernesse
Of good byleeue; and no man with thee holdith
Sauf cursid caitifs, heires of dirknesse:
For verray routhe of thee myn herte coldith.

But the poet urges him even yet to rise up out of the slough of heresy, and not think it a shame to obey Holy Church, to which the laity ought to leave matters of doctrine. He should "climb no more in Holy Writ so high," but read the story of Lancelot, the treatise of Vegetius, or some work on the art of chivalry. If he wants something "of authority" he might go to the books of Judges, Kings, and Joshua, to Judith, or to Paralipomenon (Chronicles) and Maccabees; for knights did so in times past. He meddles too much, Occleve tells him, in everything; he would "shoe the goose." He contemptuously calls the King "prince of priests," not considering that priests have really a higher authority than earthly princes, and papal authority is to royal as sunlight to moonlight. To despise the power of priests was to be a rebel against Christ; and it was a presumptuous error to say that a priest, even in deadly sin, could not "make Christ's body." Finally Oldcastle is appealed to in these words:—

Cryst of thy soule glad be wolde and fayn,
Retourne knyghtly now vn to his lore.

Repente thee and with him make accord,
Conquere meryt and honour let see
Looke how our cristen Prince, our lige lord,
With many a lord and knyght beyond the see,
Laboure in armes, and thou hydest thee
And darst nat come and shewe thy visage.
O, fy for shame, how can a knyght be
Out of thonur of this rial viage?[1]

[1] The ballad will be found in *Anglia*, vol. v. 23-37, where it is printed by Miss Toulmin Smith, with prefatory remarks and annotations added.

It must not be supposed that this poem was the production of a priest. The poet, indeed, thought once of becoming one. He was a law student and clerk in the Privy Seal Office, who married for love, and is amusingly free in criticising his own faults in other of his writings. To all appearance a very sincere man, and a friend of Chaucer and Gower, he utters nothing more than the general feeling of all friends of order.

Similar sentiments, indeed, are to be found in another contemporary poem or ballad against the Lollards, which apparently was also written just about this time, and which, though anonymous, is even better known than the poem just referred to. Possibly it, too, may be from the pen of Occleve; but instead of being directly addressed to Oldcastle, it refers to him indirectly in the following stanzas:— Another poem about him.

Hit is unkyndly for a knight,
That shuld a Kynges castel kepe,
To bable the Bibel day and night
In restyng tyme when he shuld slepe;
And carefoly awey to crepe,
For alle the chief of chivalrie.
Wel aught hym to wail and wepe
That suyche lust hath in Lollardie.

An Old castel, and not repaired,
With wast walles and wowes wide;
The wages ben ful yvel wared
With suyche a capitayn to abide;
That rerethe riot for to ride
Agayns the Kynge and his clergie,
With privè peyne and porè pride;
Ther is a poynt of lollardie.[1]

In both these poems, it will be seen, Oldcastle is reproved for his devotion to the Bible. This itself was highly characteristic of a follower of Wycliffe,

[1] Wright's *Political Poems* (Rolls Series), ii. 244.

one of whose leading principles was, as we have seen, that kings and rulers should study the Bible in order to discover the principles of government. If Wycliffe was right in this, and also in his dictum that dominion was founded on grace, it seemed naturally to follow that a king who did not pursue this course might be rightfully supplanted even by a subject who would. It was also a Wycliffite principle that the Church should be disendowed; and apparently Oldcastle aimed at nothing for which he could not find plausible warrant in his master's teaching. He himself does not appear to have been a learned man. He may perhaps have known a little Latin, though there is rather a presumption to the contrary in the fact that, in 1413, two days before sentence was pronounced against him, Archbishop Arundel ordered an English translation of some determinations of the Church to be laid before him for his better comprehension. He doubtless "babbled the Bible" in Wycliffe's version, and got his letters to Hus in Bohemia written for him by his chaplains. His own vocation was mainly to support the good cause by the sword when opportunity offered; and it does not raise our estimate of his heroism that he arranged for an attack on London or the Court by night, that he retreated into obscurity when convenient, or that he confessed the poisonous nature of the volume that he was going to have had illuminated.

Prosecution of Lollards.

Shortly afterwards a certain "inveterate Lollard," named William Cleydon, was taken and burnt in London, whose opposition to Church authority was so outrageous that he thought himself competent to confer priestly orders upon his own son, and caused him to perform mass in his house on the day when his wife, rising from childbed, went to church for purification. With the name of this Cleydon is coupled by a chronicler that of Richard Turmyn, baker, who also suffered like him in Smithfield, and

possibly in the same fire.[1] Of Turmyn we know but little. But of the process against Cleydon a full account is preserved, of which it is worth while giving some brief abstract to show that, whatever may be thought of such prosecutions, they were not pressed, even in the case of meaner men than Oldcastle, with that bitterness of clerical hatred, or love of severity for its own sake, which Puritanism at a later date persistently imputed to papal and episcopal authorities.[2]

On the 17th August 1415 (just at the time Henry V. had landed in Normandy) Cleydon was examined at St. Paul's before Archbishop Chichele and the Bishops of London and Coventry, the Mayor of London also being present, and some other divines, lawyers, and clerks. It appears that for twenty years he had been defamed of heresy, and for two years had been imprisoned in Conway Castle, and afterwards for some time in the Fleet; but, being liberated, he had abjured his heresies before "dominus" John Scarle,[3] the King's Chancellor, in the time of Henry IV. He confessed that he had kept in his house several English books, which since his arrest were in the custody of the Mayor, and the Mayor said they were most perverse and wicked. One, which was a vellum book, fair written and finely bound in red leather, the Mayor exhibited to the Bishop, who inquired by whom

[1] Walsingham, ii. 307; Gregory, 108; Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, 69; Riley's *Memorials of London*, 617, 618. As to Turmyn, there is an allusion to his burning in Riley, p. 630, in which the name, taken from the city archives, appears as Richard Surmyn. Foxe gives it as Turming; but, curiously enough, Mr. Endell Tyler, in his *Henry of Monmouth*, ii. 394, note, finds it given in the Pipe Rolls as "George Gurmyn."

[2] It is the more important to give a detailed account of the process, because Mr. Tyler, the only popular historian, I believe, who has given any account of it at all (see his *Henry of Monmouth*, ii. 394), reads into it that same spirit of clerical hatred and cruelty which is too easily inferred from the severity of the punishment itself. But there is no warrant for his statement that the clergy here were "relentless exactors of a cruel and iniquitous law, straining to the very utmost its enactments to cover their deeds of blood."

[3] Not "Searle," as the name is printed in Wilkins. He was appointed Chancellor in 1399, and continued so till 1401. (See Haydn's *Book of Dignities*, pp. 354-5, ed. Ockerby.)

it was written, and about the binding. Cleydon said it was written by one John Grime, but who he was he could not tell. Asked if he had ever read it, Cleydon replied that he could not read himself, but had heard nearly a quarter of it read by one John Fuller, a man in his service. Asked if he thought the contents good and catholic, he said he thought many things in the book profitable to his soul, and he specially liked it on account of a sermon contained in it which had once been preached at Horsfaldowne. He was then asked if since his abjuration he had had communication with one Richard Baker (*i.e.* Turmyn) of London. He said, Yes, for Baker had often come to his house for that purpose; but he admitted that he knew him to be defamed of heretical pravity. The Bishop then ordered the books to be examined by Robert Gilbert, D.D., the celebrated William Lyndewode, LL.D., and others; and directed John Estcourt, general examiner of the Court of Canterbury, to take the examination of David Berde, Alexander Philip, and Balthazar Mero as witnesses.

On the following Monday, the 19th, Estcourt read the statements of these witnesses before the Bishop of London (Richard Clifford), the Bishop of St. David's (Stephen Patrington), and other doctors and clerks. Of the three witnesses, the first, David Berde, was a young man of twenty-three, who had been Cleydon's apprentice. He was asked if he knew a little book or tract called *The Lantern of Light*, which was shown him, and had known his late master to read it or have it read to him, and whether he approved of its contents and dogmatisings. He replied that he knew the book, and that it contained the Ten Commandments in English with other things, and he had seen his master's servant, John Fuller, reading it to him by his order in a house of his in St. Martin's Lane; also that his master, Cleydon, was much delighted with the contents, maintaining them to be good,

lawful, and catholic. Balthazar Mero and David Philip, other servants of Cleydon, were often present.

Saunder (or Alexander) Philip, who was over fifteen, and had also been an apprentice of Cleydon's, but was now in the household of the Mayor of London, gave similar testimony, with the further addition that about Midlent last he had seen the sheets of the little book unbound carried to Cleydon's house by John Grime, who wrote them, and that Grime and Fuller had sat from eight in the morning till twilight on the Sunday following in Cleydon's house reading and correcting them, Cleydon being most part of the day an auditor. And he had heard Cleydon say he would rather pay three times the value of that book than be without it. Also he said that Richard Baker and one Montford, who were vehemently suspected of Lollardy, came divers days to Cleydon's house and disputed frequently of the contents of the book and of the articles of the faith.

Bartholomew Mero, a Londoner, aged thirty, who had been in Cleydon's service the year before, also gave similar testimony, and added that he had seen Cleydon communicating on articles of Holy Scripture with Richard Baker and Montfort.

There were then read in court divers English treatises found in Cleydon's house, which had been examined by four friars of different orders, whose names are given; and they were shown to contain many heresies, especially *The Lantern of Light*. The Pope was called Antichrist, archbishops and bishops generally were declared to be the beast of Antichrist, the Court of Rome the chief head of Antichrist; and besides abuse of this kind, were statements that Christ never planted *private religions*, that is to say, religious orders like those of the friars, and a good many other Wycliffite sentiments sub-

versive of all Church authority. Sentence was accordingly pronounced upon Cleydon as a relapsed heretic.[1]

Now, of course, in the present age we all value freedom of opinion, and do not deny the right even of an illiterate man who thinks himself wiser than great schoolmen and divines, either of his own or past ages, to read, or get read to him, what books he pleases, and to admire what sentiments he thinks admirable, however noxious they may be held by the best judges or even by the community at large. That a system of perfect liberty is the best system in such matters far be it from me to dispute. And yet I have known, even in my own day, the great majority of Englishmen, including many men who were sensible enough in other matters, convulsed with indignation about a thing which surely might have been considered sentimental rather than practical. Nay, so far did this feeling carry men in the middle of the nineteenth century, that they actually got an Act of Parliament passed to take the virus out of ecclesiastical titles which had been bestowed by the Pope and not by the sovereign of the realm. Things sentimental have undoubtedly a serious side ; but if, even in days of freedom, we can be shaken out of our philosophy of letting tares and wheat grow together in men's minds till the harvest, can we wonder that five hundred years ago, when religion was much more of a system, and the question was between maintaining that system and permitting the encroachments of anarchy in religion and in temporal matters also, people resorted to remedies which we now consider extreme and ill-justified? We must not condemn our ancestors too strongly without understanding their ideas first. But above all, we should not speak of their judicial processes in matters relating to poisonous opinions as if their judges were truculent and thirsted

[1] Wilkins, iii. 371-5.

for the blood of misguided men, who were only guilty of taking different views from their own.

On the 1st July 1416, Archbishop Chichele directed a pastoral letter to the Bishop of London, and doubtless to his other suffragans, to give effect to a recent constitution enacted in Convocation. By this constitution all bishops and archdeacons were required to make diligent inquiry at least twice a year in every deanery and parish touching persons suspected of heresy, or of holding secret conventicles, or leading lives at variance with the common conversation of faithful men, or possessing books written in English, or receiving persons who favoured heresy. All such persons were to be at once denounced by the archdeacons to their dioceses, who were then to take proceedings against them and commit to prison those convicted until the next provincial Convocation at least, certifying all that was done, and especially abjurations, to the official of the Court of Canterbury.[1]

Archbishop Chichele's measures against heresy.

These measures probably kept down the fire for awhile, and we do not hear of any punishments expressly inflicted for Lollardy. On Michaelmas Day one Benet Wolman (or John Benet, woolman, as Stowe calls him), who is said to have been a great Lollard, was hanged, and afterwards beheaded, for treason, not burnt like a relapsed heretic, which he probably was not; and on the 8th Oct. William Parchmyner,[2] who had rescued Oldcastle from the Tower, suffered the like fate. The heads of both these offenders were set upon London Bridge. If either of them had been prosecuted in the ecclesiastical court he had probably abjured. Wolman suffered as a partisan of the

Other disturbances later.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 378.

[2] No doubt the name means parchment maker. "In *Issue Roll*, Mich. 1 Hen. V., are payments for the arrest of Lollards, especially to one constable for seizing Lollard books in the house of a *parchment-maker*; another for searching the house of William, the *parchment-maker*, in Smithfield, where Sir John Oldcastle dwelt." Notes to *An English Chronicle*, edited by J. S. Davies for the Camden Society, p. 183. See the entries in Devon's *Issue Rolls*, 330-32.

pretender Thomas Trumpington, who gave out that he was Richard II. still alive.[1] But next year (1417) we hear of one Henry Greyndor, a bold propagator of Oldcastle's principles, who ventured to present a bill to the King, suggesting that he should resume possession of all goods and lands given to the Church, which he said would be the fulfilment of an old prophecy. The King replied that if such a thing were to be done all other property ought to be returned likewise, and that he would sooner be cut in pieces by the sword than resume Church property. The petitioner was sent to prison for his audacity.[2]

Rewards offered for Oldcastle's apprehension.

The Lollards, however, were not yet to be repressed, and when the King was spending his Christmas at Kenilworth a squire of Oldcastle's seems to have laid an ambush for him.[3] Renewed proclamations were issued in the Midland and Western counties for Oldcastle's apprehension.[4] The rewards offered for his capture were much the same as before:—1000 marks, or lands worth £20 a year for life to any one who could take him; or if any city, borough, or town could do so and bring him to the King, it should be free of any *quinzisme*, *disme*, or other tax during the King's life, even though granted by Parliament later. In the summer of 1417 Henry's second expedition into France afforded the Lollards a new opportunity. Seditious bills attacking the Church were distributed in every considerable house or inn at St. Albans, Northampton, and Reading.[5] Oldcastle himself was believed to have incited the Scots to invade England in the King's absence, and to have had an interview with William Douglas at Pomfret, promising him

[1] Walsingham, ii. 317; *Chron. of London* (ed. Nicolas), 104; Riley's *Memorials*, 638; Stowe, 352.

[2] Elmham's *Lib. Metricus* in Cole, 148; Capgrave *de Illust. Henricis*, 121.

[3] Walsingham, ii. 317.

[4] *Close Roll*, 4 Hen. V. *m.* 7 *d.* (cited by Waugh). The form of the proclamation in English may be seen in Hearne's App. to *Titus Livius*, 218.

[5] Hearne's *Otterbourne*, 278; Elmham's *Lib. Metricus*, 158; Walsingham, *l.c.*

£3000 to bring with him the pretended Richard II. who should show himself as king. A covenant to that effect was said to have been transmitted to the Duke of Albany. The Scots, however, only got the length of besieging Roxburgh, where their mines were countermined; and they took to flight when the Dukes of Exeter and Bedford, who were at Bridlington on pilgrimage, raised the country against them.[1]

Oldcastle himself kept hiding in various places, but at last the Abbot of St. Albans heard that he had been staying some days in the house of one of his dependants. The Abbot accordingly sent thither some of his servants by night, who, though they did not find the man they wanted, succeeded in arresting some of his principal retainers. This apparently spoiled some very pretty project, and greatly disconcerted Oldcastle himself. In the house were found some books written in English, and some others which had been illuminated with pictures of saints, but the saints' heads had been erased; and there were Litanies in which the names of all the saints, including that of the Virgin, had been so treated, leaving the *Parce nobis, Domine*, after them untouched. The book which had been thus maltreated the Abbot sent to the King, who sent it again to the Archbishop of Canterbury, that it might be exhibited in sermons at Paul's Cross as a glaring example of Lollard irreverence.[2]

Oldcastle escaped once more to the borders of Wales[3]; but he was ultimately secured and made prisoner in the land of Powis after a stiff fight with his captors, in which he himself was wounded. He was brought up to London in a horse-litter. Parliament had met in November, and the Lords and

[1] Walsingham, ii. 325; *Otterbourne*, 278; Elmham's *Lib. Metr.* 150, 151.
[2] Walsingham, ii. 326.
[3] See authorities cited by Waugh in *Engl. Hist. Review*, xx. 655.

Commons were all desirous that it should not be dissolved until the arch-heretic was brought before them for examination. Lord Powis was despatched with an armed force to bring him up from Pool Castle, where he had been secured after his arrest, and he appeared before Parliament on the 14th December accompanied by his secretary—a clergyman, of course. The record of his outlawry was read over to him in English, and he was asked to show cause why he should not be condemned to death. In reply he began a discourse about the mercy of God, and that mortals should exalt mercy above judgment, that vengeance belonged only to God, and so forth, till the Chief Justice appealed to the Duke of Bedford, who was regent in the King's absence, not to allow further waste of time. The regent, accordingly, told him to answer to the point, and after a brief pause he said, in the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 3), "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of man's judgment." But with this exordium he was entering upon another irrelevant discourse, when the chief justice demanded finally that he should show if he could why he should not suffer death. Being thus pressed he adopted a haughty mien, and replied that he acknowledged none of them as his judge, seeing that his liege lord, King Richard, was still alive in Scotland. Of course there was nothing more to be done after such a speech but to pronounce judgment upon him.[1]

Oldcastle condemned in Parliament.

The judgment was passed, as usual in such cases, on the petition of the Commons. It was that, as a traitor to God and notorious heretic, proved to be such by a document delivered into Parliament by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and also as a traitor to the King and his realm, he should be taken to the Tower of London, and from thence drawn through the city to the new gallows in the parish of St. Giles's, outside the bar of the Old Temple, and there hanged

[1] Walsingham, ii. 327, 328; *Rot. Parl.*, iv. 107-10.

and burnt.[1] The sentence seems to have been executed at once. On the 14th Dec., the morrow of St. Lucy the Virgin, he was taken through London to Tower Hill in the same chair or litter in which he had been brought to Westminster, and then laid on a hurdle, on which he was dragged to St. Giles's. There the Dukes of Bedford and Exeter, and, generally speaking, all the lords who had attended Parliament, had assembled to witness his execution. He was hung from the gallows by a strong chain with a great blazing fire beneath him, and the gallows itself was burnt along with him. Before he suffered, Bedford said he grieved for him and strongly exhorted him to be confessed. But he told the regent he had much more need to grieve for himself; and as for confession, he would not declare his sins to St. Peter or St. Paul if they were present. His last words, however, were said to have been addressed to Sir Thomas Erpingham, declaring that he should rise from the dead after three days, and adjuring him, when he should see the miracle, to procure peace for the Lollard religion. He died without a groan.[2] and executed.

If he really entertained such a belief as that he would rise from the dead in three days, we must presume that mental aberration had much to do with his whole conduct. And this is not an uncharitable supposition, for the vagaries of fanaticism are inscrutable. Nor must we blame the age, rough and indiscriminating as it was in cases of the kind, for lack of mercy towards him. For he had been shown much indulgence; but wrong-headed ideas made him continually more perverse, and the power which he undoubtedly exercised over a large part of the population made him more and more dangerous as long as he was not held in check. With his death the high

[1] *Rot. Parl.*, iv. 108.

[2] Walsingham, ii. 328; Gregory, 116; Elmham's *Lib. Met.*, 159; *Chron. of London* (ed. Nicolas), 106; Adam of Usk, 131; *Otterbourne*, 280.

political game of Lollardy was at an end. No man was able to regret the fate of one who had shown himself in the eyes of all a disgrace to knighthood; and henceforth no powerful patrons set themselves to encourage disloyal clergymen in disobedience to their ecclesiastical superiors. The Church had already recovered control of her own clergy whenever they were not thus backed up. Henceforward she could set her house in order with more deliberation.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

(See page 57.)

I am enabled by the courtesy of Mr. Fowler, of the Public Record Office, to give the following extracts from a forthcoming volume of his *Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Henry IV.*:—

Patent 9 Hen. IV. pt. 2. m. 25 *d.* [A.D. 1408].

"*May* 22, *Westm.*—Commission to Alexander, bishop of Norwich, the prior of Holy Trinity, Norwich, the sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, the mayor and sheriffs of Norwich, to cause proclamations to be made within the said City and the suburbs of the same, and the said counties, that no one shall preach and teach new and unheard of opinions contrary to the Catholic faith, and to arrest all who do so, and commit them to the King's gaol until the King give orders for their delivery."

"*January* 20, *Westm.*—Commission as above (against Lollards) to the prior of St. Mary, Coventre, the mayor and bailiffs of Coventre, John Smythier and Master Richard Parker, clerk, in the said city and the suburbs of the same, and elsewhere within the counties of Warwick and Leicester."

"*August* 4, *Westm.*—The like to R., bishop of London, in the City of London and suburbs of the same, and elsewhere within his diocese."

"*August* 3, *Westm.*—The like to N., bishop of Bath and Wells, in the cities of Bath and Wells and the suburbs of the same, and elsewhere within his diocese."

Patent 10 Hen. IV. pt. 2. m. 21 *d.* [A.D. 1409].

"*June* 7, *Westm.*—Commission to N., bishop of Bath and Wells, on information that certain satellites of Satan preach divers new

and unheard of doctrines and false opinions and wickednesses in certain places within his diocese and the town of Bristol, and hold schools in occult, attracting to themselves many of the King's lieges, to cause proclamations to be made within the said diocese and town, forbidding this, and to arrest and imprison all who do so."

CHAPTER II

OF HERESIES, SCHISMS, AND COUNCILS

Of course, there was still very much to do before Lollardy could be reduced to a mere matter of private opinion, which in the course of some years it practically became with all erratic thinkers who valued either their lives or their respectability. For in truth, though the best days of scholastic training were past, churchmen still were, on the whole, better educated than the laity; and men like Sir John Oldcastle and other laymen could hardly have set themselves up in avowed opposition to Church authority if they had not found encouragement to do so in the counsel of their own divines and the principles of a great leader like Wycliffe. But even when its first violence was subdued, Lollardy remained a latent power in the community. Its leaven, indeed, was very widely diffused. Its teachings, for good and evil, have influenced human thought and action more or less through all succeeding centuries. They mingled with and domineered over the Reformation, though they did not bring it on. They provoked tyranny, intolerance, and revolution, which again, in its turn, produced reaction. They found in later times a too injurious antidote in Rationalism, and in our day have suffered serious shipwreck from the Higher Criticism. But many of the results still remain and always will remain; for there was good as well as evil in Lollardy.

And it is desirable, before we go farther, to examine the good as well as the evil at the fountain head. I have said that Wycliffe's chief bequest to posterity was the English Bible. His great aim was to popularise the Scriptures by translation into the vernacular speech, and, notwithstanding the disapproval of contemporary churchmen, he succeeded to an extent which was thought altogether unbecoming. "This Master Wycliffe," says a chronicler of that age, "translated into the English, not an angelic, tongue (*in Anglicam linguam, non angelicam*) the gospel that Christ committed to the clergy and doctors of the Church that they might administer it gently to laymen and infirm persons according to the requirements of the time and their individual wants and mental hunger. So by him it is becoming common, and more open to lay men and women who know how to read than it usually is to clerks of good understanding with a fair amount of learning. And thus the gospel pearl is cast forth and trodden by swine; what is usually held dear by clerks and laymen is rendered, as it were, a common subject of merriment to both (*quasi jocositas communis utriusque*); the gem of clerks is turned into the sport of laymen; so that what was once a talent given from above to clergy and doctors of the Church may be a *commune æternum* to the laity."[1] The feeling was that Scripture was a thing too sacred to be handled by any but a sacred order of men trained to use it properly; and, familiar as we have become with a vernacular Bible, if we could only transfer ourselves backwards some centuries to a period when the sacred

Effect of Wycliffe's Bible.

[1] What was meant by the words *commune æternum* appears from a reference made immediately afterwards to a prediction of William de Saint Amour in these words: "Some labour to change the gospel of Christ into another gospel which they say will be more perfect, and better and worthier, which they call the Eternal Gospel (*Evangelium æternum*), or the Gospel of the Holy Spirit." "Eternal it may be called," adds the chronicler, "because now vulgar and common in our mother tongue and so in eternal memory" (*Chronica H. Knighton* (ed. Lumby), ii. 152).

text had always been studied in Latin, and when laymen who could read had been accustomed to quite other literature, we might not feel upon reflection that the vulgarisation of Holy Writ was a thing altogether free from objection.

Yet if the sacred order of men had themselves so valued their high privileges as to become really well versed in the Word which it was their business thus economically to dispense to the laity, there ought surely to have been little ground for the complaint that Scripture was becoming better known to laymen who could read than it commonly was to clerks of good understanding. Scripture, no doubt, is an inexhaustible mine, and no one man, or body of men, clerks or laymen, can explore it thoroughly; but this is surely no reason for limiting the number of labourers engaged in the operation. The danger, of course, was that, without special learning, a man was too apt to be led astray about the true sense. And such is undoubtedly the case, though there are misapprehensions that no amount of learning can avert. Yet, on the other hand, the faculty of true interpretation comes very often of a certain gift which is not conferred by mere scholastic training or even by the laying on of hands.

Exaggeration of Wycliffe's own work.

Some exaggeration, indeed, of what Wycliffe did appears to have prevailed even from an early period. It has been a common belief that he was the first to translate the Bible into English, and also that it was the whole Bible that he himself translated. Both these ideas must be considered questionable; the latter extremely so. Within thirty years of his death, it is true, John Hus in Bohemia writes of it as a report among the English that Wycliffe had translated the whole Bible from the Latin into their language; but the thing is out of the question. The labour of such a work would have been enormous even for a man of Wycliffe's extraordinary energy, and his immense

activity in other things would assuredly have made it impossible to him. Nor does Knighton, the authority above quoted, say anything of the kind. What "Master Wycliffe" translated and vulgarised, he tells us, was "the gospel that Christ committed to the clergy and doctors of the Church"; and "the gospel" here cannot be understood as more than the Four Gospels at the utmost. It may, in fact, mean less. But that Wycliffe aimed at getting a new translation of the whole Scriptures made is what we should naturally understand by the words of Archbishop Arundel within a generation after his death. For writing to Pope John XXIII. the Archbishop says of him: "He even tried by every means in his power to undermine the very faith and teaching of Holy Church, filling up the measure of his malice by devising the expedient of a new translation of the Scripture in the mother tongue (*novæ ad suæ malitiæ complementum Scripturarum in linguam maternam translationis practica adinventa*).[1] The words do not imply that Wycliffe himself had done more than start a considerable scheme, which we may believe, reasonably enough, that his followers did much to complete, notwithstanding the Archbishop's own efforts to bring their labours under control.

It is true there had always been vernacular translations of the Bible, in whole or in part. In Cranmer's Preface to the Bible, written mainly to recommend the domestic reading of the Scriptures which had hitherto been discouraged, he says:— Old translations before Wycliffe.

> It is not much above one hundred years ago since Scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongue within this realm; and many hundred years before that it was translated and read in the Saxons' tongue, which at that time was our mothers' tongue: whereof there remaineth yet divers copies found lately in old abbeys, of such antique manners of writing and speaking, that few men

[1] Wilkins, iii. 350.

now been able to read and understand them. And when this language waxed old and out of common usage, because folk should not lack the fruit of reading, it was again translated in the newer language. Whereof yet also many copies remain and be daily found.[1]

This was written, it should be observed, just after the dissolution of the monasteries, when all their literary treasures came to light. And Cranmer, it may be further noted, does not even hint that the newer translations replacing the obsolete Anglo-Saxon versions were due to Wycliffe. This, however, is not very wonderful, as Wycliffe was still regarded in England as a heretic. But Sir Thomas More in his *Dialogue*, written some years before, makes a statement which suggests that there were readable English translations of an earlier date than Wycliffe's :—

The whole Bible was, long before his days, by virtuous and well-learned men translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people with devotion and soberness well and reverently read.[2]

And a little farther on he tells us that he himself had seen some of these old translations (in MS. of course), authorised for use by the bishop of the diocese, when they were left in the hands of men and women among the laity.[3] This statement it is important to note for more than one reason, but chiefly in correction of a vulgar error which was sedulously propagated by some even in Sir Thomas More's day, and which has been current ever since—that the Church of Rome was always opposed to any translation whatever of the Bible, and to its use by laymen. The only ground for such an insinuation in

[1] Cranmer's *Miscellaneous Writings* (Parker Soc.), p. 119.

[2] More's *Works*, p. 233.

[3] "Myself have seen and can show you Bibles fair and old written in English, which have been known and seen by the bishop of the diocese and left in laymen's hands and women's, to such as he knew for good and Catholic folk that used it with devotion and soberness" (More's *Works*, 234).

More's day was the suppression of Tyndale's New Testament, and of other corrupt translations with heretical commentaries. But the truth is, the Church of Rome was not at all opposed to the making of translations of Scripture, or to placing them in the hands of the laity under what were deemed proper precautions. It was only judged necessary to see that no unauthorised or corrupt translations got abroad, and even in this matter it would seem the authorities were not roused to special vigilance till they took alarm at the diffusion of Wycliffite translations in the generation after his death. We have already seen the determination taken by a provincial council at Oxford, and published in January 1409, that no one was either to make translations from Scripture or to read any such that had been made in the days of Wycliffe, or since his time, until such translations had been approved by the bishop of the diocese or by the provincial council.[1] It is this restriction which is glanced at by Cranmer in the passage above quoted, where he says that it is not much above a hundred years "since Scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongue"; and we may add that it was a restriction peculiar to England. For old vernacular translations abound which were used in foreign countries; and the disputant who in More's *Dialogue* pleads in favour of Tyndale's translation, referring to this constitution of the Synod of Oxford, says, "And this is a law very provincial, for it holdeth but here. For in all other countries of Christendom the people have the Scripture translated into their own tongue, and the clergy there findeth no such fault therein."[2]

The clergy, in short, as they were charged with the care of men's souls, were bound, according to the prevailing view of their duty, to see that what men read was entirely wholesome. We may well feel in

[1] Wilkins, iii. 317.

[2] More's *Works*, p. 224.

this twentieth century, as we have done for some centuries past, that the law of perfect liberty is best, and the attempt which Rome still keeps up to control such matters by the "Index" deserves as little sympathy as it commands. But if we would understand the history of past times we must enter into the spirit of past times. We must conceive of the clergy as a self-governing body having a divine commission to guide, direct, and even control the laity in all that concerned the welfare of their souls, expounding Scripture to them according to their several needs, while inculcating the principles of the faith and commanding obedience to Church ordinances as the necessary means of grace. To allow the use of Scripture to get out of their control when it was easy to keep it under their supervision would have been on their part a manifest dereliction of duty.

On the other hand, it may well be presumed that the great majority of laymen easily conceded to the clergy the full right to guide and govern them in matters which were not very oppressive. Few laymen could have cared to read the Scriptures in the vernacular themselves, and if it was thought "unkindly" for a knight "to babble the Bible" when he should be keeping a king's castle, we cannot imagine that it was much the practice for laymen to give a very attentive study to Holy Writ. An English Bible, moreover, must have been an expensive luxury, merely for the use of the wealthy, so that the demand for copies even in Wycliffe's day must have been somewhat limited. The question therefore arises, Could there really have been before his time any native versions of later date than the almost unreadable Anglo-Saxon ones? More's testimony is that there were such, earlier than Wycliffe's, made by virtuous and well-learned men; but some doubt may possibly be entertained as to whether he judged rightly of their antiquity. He had seen some old MSS. of the

sacred text in English authorised by bishops for use of special persons, and possibly judged from that very fact that they must have been anterior to the poisoned translation of Wycliffe. On the contrary, the authorisation at least was probably, for a reason we shall see presently, not earlier than Archbishop Arundel's decree in 1409. And why should Wycliffe's translation have been a poisonous one? Wycliffe himself was conscious of no disloyalty to the Church, nor do his writings show that he construed texts in a very different manner from what churchmen generally did. His teaching was objected to, but he was never condemned as a heretic while he lived; and it is quite possible that it was his translation of the Bible, or translations made in connection with his scheme, that bishops may have authorised after his day for the use of the laity. Earlier translations in a tongue rightly called English we should, in fact, hardly look for. English literature was then just at the birth. William Langland, no doubt, had written in English alliterative verse his *Vision of Piers Plowman*, but no considerable work either of Chaucer or of Gower had appeared in their own mother tongue before the death of Wycliffe. French was still the language of the Court and of cultivated people. Sir John Mandeville, who wrote his travels in Latin, had translated them into French in the first place, though he afterwards translated them into English also. It seems as if an English reading public could hardly have existed very long when Wycliffe began to set on foot the translation of the Bible.

But an English Bible must have been a new thing.

In fact, Wycliffe's own arguments for having the Bible in English go far to show that an English Bible did not then exist. He refers to the gift of tongues bestowed upon the apostles at Pentecost in proof that God wished people to be taught in divers tongues. He says that St. Jerome translated the Bible into Latin that it might afterwards be trans-

lated into other tongues, and he adds: "Also the worthy realm of France, notwithstanding all lettings, hath translated the Bible and the Gospels, with other true sentences of doctors, out of Latin into French. Why shoulden not English men do so? As lords of England have the Bible in French, so it were not against reason that they hadden the same sentence in English; for thus God's law would be better known and more trowed for one-head of wit, and more accord be betwixt realms. And heretofore friars have taught in England the Paternoster in English tongue, as men sayen in the play of York and in many other countries. Sithen the Paternoster is part of Matthew's Gospel, as clerks knowen, why may not all be turned to English truly, as is this part?—specially sith all Christian men, learned and lewed, that shulen be saved, moten algates sue [*i.e.* follow] Christ, and know his lore and his life."[1]

Thus it was for the common people that Wycliffe desired to translate the Bible. No objection had ever been raised to lords and knights having it in French. But English was still regarded as the language of clodhoppers and country bumpkins. It was the *Anglica lingua non angelica* of Knighton, and to translate Scripture into such a tongue for general use among the people was esteemed a serious profanation.

It may be argued, undoubtedly, that the Church must have found some things seriously wrong in Wycliffe's translation when the provincial decree was passed at Oxford, published in 1409, in which his name was expressly mentioned. For the prohibition was against any one translating by his own authority any passage of Scripture (*textus aliquis sanctæ Scripturæ*) in the form of a book, booklet, or tract, and against any one reading such book, booklet, or tract, "lately made in the time of the said John Wycliffe or since," until such translation should have been approved by

[1] Matthew's *English Works of Wyclif*, 429, 430.

the bishop of the diocese, or, if necessary, by the provincial council. But looking closely at these words we find nothing like a distinct intimation that the Wycliffite version was erroneous.[1] Nay, not even in Archbishop Arundel's letter to the Pope is there any statement to that effect. The Archbishop does, indeed, write to the Pope that Wycliffe's plan of a new translation was the climax of his malicious endeavours to undermine the faith and teaching of the Church; but he says nothing about particular mistranslations. The subject of complaint is apparently just what it clearly is in Knighton, that the holy book was vulgarised, and its exposition taken out of the hands of the clergy by a translation intended for the free use of laymen, who had been always guided hitherto by their spiritual advisers in the reading and interpretation of Scripture. It is this abuse against which the constitution of Oxford was directed, and it did not forbid the laity to have such translations—even Wycliffe's translations—if the MSS. had been submitted to the approval of the diocesan bishop and had received his sanction. And there is no appearance that such episcopal authorisations were ever issued before.

At all events the evidence is clear that MS. translations existing at the present day, and generally esteemed to be Wycliffite, obtained such authorisation, and were not only beautifully executed, but held in very high esteem. Thus, Messrs. Forshall and Madden write in their Introduction to the Wycliffite Bible :—

Wycliffite Bibles authorised by bishops.

> The new copies passed into the hands of all classes of the people. Even the Sovereign himself and the princes of the

[1] The preamble of the decree only indicates a general danger connected with new translations. It is to the following effect :—

"It is a dangerous thing, as St. Jerome declares, to translate the text of Holy Scripture out of one idiom into another, since it is not easy, in translations, to preserve exactly the same meaning in all things; and St. Jerome himself, though inspired, confessed he had often erred in that matter."—Wilkins' *Concilia*, iii. 317.

blood royal did not disdain to possess them. The volumes were in many instances executed in a costly manner, and were usually written upon vellum by experienced scribes. This implies not merely the value which was set upon the Word of God, but also that the scribes found a reward for their labours among the wealthier part of the community.

One question only, I think, can be raised about these statements, and that is about the first sentence. Did the new copies really pass into the hands of all classes? It may have been Wycliffe's desire that they should do so, as I have indeed suggested. But how could they have got into the hands of poor labouring men? Unlearned squires might have had them, who had money, and did not even know French. Wealthy merchants also, who were more at home in English. But how could they have got into the hands of other than wealthy people? Among royal owners of them it is known that the saintly King Henry VI. possessed a beautiful vellum copy which he gave to the monks of the London Charter House, and that Henry VII. possessed another, illuminated with the royal arms, the Beaufort portcullis, and the red and white roses of the Tudors. Another illuminated copy belonged to Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, the youngest son of Edward III., who was murdered at Calais in 1397. The celebrated Dr. Adam Clarke, who once possessed this MS., would not allow it to be of Wycliffite origin. "How long before 1397 this work was written," he truly remarks, "is uncertain; but it must have been, in the very nature of things, several years before that time." That, of course, is indisputable; but the date of the Duke's murder was thirteen years after Wycliffe's death, and as yet neither the Church nor even a provincial council had forbidden either the reading or the translation. So that there really was no reason why Thomas of Woodstock should not have

and possessed by royal owners.

procured a copy of a work set on foot by the most notable divine of his own day. Nor, indeed, would the restriction afterwards placed on translations by the Council at Oxford have kept it out of the hands of a royal duke, for a copy is extant bearing the autograph of that other Duke of Gloucester known as "the good Duke Humphrey," in the time of Henry VI. Besides, as already stated, Henry VI. himself had one. And all these are commonly reputed to be of Wycliffite origin.

Abbot Gasquet, on the contrary, contends that they must be copies of that earlier Bible which, on Sir Thomas More's authority, he believes to have existed before Wycliffe. But if this theory be true, Wycliffe's new translation (supposing that such an earlier work existed) was disfigured, as Tyndale's was afterwards, by objectionable renderings of various passages of Scripture which had been better translated before; and we know not where such mistranslations were ever exposed, or were even ever noticed. Abbot Gasquet, indeed, is extremely dubious as to Wycliffe having left behind him any biblical translation of his own; and he explains the words of Knighton to refer only to the vulgarising of the gospel message in English, not to the translation even of a single one of the four Gospels in MS. But besides the statement of John Hus that in Bohemia a report existed to the effect that Wycliffe had translated the whole Bible—which undoubtedly he could not have done, though Archbishop Arundel's words imply that he intended it—we have another passage in Sir Thomas More's writings which rather strongly suggests the existence of a Wycliffite version of Scripture. For such a version, apparently, was found to exist even in More's own day. Speaking of the peculiar case of Richard Hunne, who after his death was condemned and burned for heresy, he remarks, that when he was denounced as a heretic— Hunne's Bible.

There lay his English Bible open and some other English books of his, that every man might see, the places noted with his own hand, such words and in such wise that there would no wise man that good were have any great doubt after the sight thereof what naughty minds the men had, both he that so noted them and he that so made them. I remember not now the specialities of the matter, nor the formal words as they were written. But this I remember well, that besides other things framed for the favor of divers other heresies, there were in the prologue of that Bible such words touching the Blessed Sacrament as good Christian men did much abhor to hear, and which gave the readers undoubted occasion to think that the book was written after Wycliffe's copy and by him translated into our tongue. And yet whether the book be burned or secretly kept, I cannot surely say."[1]

He adds that if the clergy were of his mind, it ought to be kept in justification of what they had done. Now what could be the meaning of the opinion "that the book was written after Wycliffe's copy and by him translated into our tongue"? Surely, nothing else than that the Bible in question was a copy of a translation attributed to Wycliffe. And the further progress of the conversation of which this passage forms a part seems to make the matter even more distinct. For More's visitor who converses with him on this subject, objects: "For all this can I see no reason why the clergy should keep the Bible out of laymen's hands;" and he is answered by More: "I had went (*i.e.* weened) quod I, that I had proved you plainly that they keep it not from them. . . . For as for some of the old ones that were before Wycliffe's days, [they] remain lawful and be in some folk's hands had and read."[2] There were, therefore, in More's opinion, good Catholic translations current, and also at least one Wycliffite version, which he apparently supposed to have been the work of Wycliffe himself.

[1] More's *Works*, p. 240.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

Hunne's book was the Wycliffite version, and it evidently inspired More with horror; yet we may be a little doubtful whether it was the text of the translation, or only the prologue and occasional comments on the text, with the marks made against some passages by Hunne himself, that seemed to him so objectionable. More could not remember particulars of the matter and phraseology, and he may, even though he believed the translation itself to be corrupt, have been mistaken in that belief. It was from the marks and the comments made, and especially from the prologue, that he judged the book to be "written after Wycliffe's copy." As for the text of the translation, he clearly had never compared it with that of "the old ones that were" (in his estimation) "before Wycliffe's days." Nor does it appear that any exception was taken to it by others besides himself. It was from the prologue alone, according to Foxe's testimony derived from the episcopal register, that the thirteen "new articles commenced against Hunne after his death" were collected, which were read on the Sunday following by the preacher at Paul's Cross.[1]

Nevertheless, More's belief that there were English translations before Wycliffe's was not altogether a mistaken one. For there is no doubt that in the north of England the Psalter, at least, had been translated by Richard Rolle, the Hermit of Hampole, and elsewhere apparently by others. In the north also the separate Gospels and other books of the New Testament had been fully translated, apparently before Wycliffe's version appeared, in the form of commentaries. In one version the Acts of the Apostles begins :—

> Also St. Luke tells and writes of the deeds of the Apostles, and says this wise, "Forsooth, thou Theophul, the first sermon I made of all that Jesus began to do and teach."

[1] Foxe, iv. 186.

Of some books also there are versions which appear to be of southern, and probably of Kentish origin. In fact there exist in different libraries five composite MSS. of a version containing the greater part of the New Testament made in the fourteenth century independently of Wycliffe's influence. This version has been recently published by the Cambridge University Press.[1] Very few MSS. of it, however, are extant,[2] and it is not likely that such versions were very numerous. This particular one seems to have been made for the use of the inmates of some nunnery, to assist their intelligence of the Latin text; for the idea of using a translation as a substitute for the Latin did not commend itself to loyal children of the Church, even when there was no ordinance either against making or reading such translations. On this point an extract from the *Chastising of God's Children*—a work also written for nuns very early in the fifteenth century [3]—is highly instructive and interesting :—

A fourteenth century English New Testament.

Many men reproveth to have the Psalter or Matins, or the Gospel, in English, or the Bible, because they may not be translated into no vulgar word as it standeth without circumlocution after the feeling of the first writers which translated that into Latin by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Natheless I will not reprove such translations, ne I reprove not to have them in English, ne to read on them where they may stir you to more devotion and to the love of God. But utterly to use them in English and to leave the Latin I hold it not commendable, and namely in them that been bounden to say their Psalter or Matins of our Lady. For a man's confessor giveth him in penance to say his Psalter withouten

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[1] A Fourteenth Century English Biblical Version, edited by Anna C. Paues. The text was first published in 1902, with a very interesting introduction, which was replaced by another, more devoted to the language and the translation, in 1904.

[2] The known MSS. are only five in number.

[3] See Miss Paues's Introduction, pp. xxv., xxviii. The extract is quoted by her on the latter page. I have modernised the spelling for the sake of the reader.

any other words, and [if] he go forth and say it in English and not in Latin as was ordained, this man, I ween, doeth not his penance. Skills [*i.e.* reasons] I may show reasonable and many, but because that I trust to God that ye will not use your Psalter in that manner, therefore I leave off to speaken of this matter, and counsel you, as I said before, that ye pray entirely in time of your service whereto ye been bounden by the ordinance of Holy Church and in the manner as it was ordained by our holy fathers.

The writer of these words was entirely opposed to any one taking liberties with the discipline of the Church, but he favoured the legitimate use of English translations. He appreciated, nevertheless, the reasons that were sometimes urged against translating the Bible into English at all—reasons which were really not without weight, and deserve more consideration than is given to them in modern times, when we imagine that a modern version should present the reader with the whole thought contained in the original Greek or Hebrew. The men of the Middle Ages had not many opportunities of studying either of those two languages, but the venerable translation made by St. Jerome brought them nearer to the mind of the inspired writers than any other version could do; and a vernacular translation was only to be regarded as a paraphrase or commentary. But even paraphrases were to be used with caution and not placed before everybody. For it was, as we have seen, the very idea of making the Scriptures common in English to every layman who could read that seemed at first something like desecration. If these translations were to be read freely without having been ever examined by episcopal authority, and even by persons not very deferential to authority at all, the province of the clergy, as then understood, was distinctly invaded, and they could not properly discharge their duties towards the laity. By and by episcopal authority was recognised, and MS. transla-

tions, having been submitted to episcopal supervision, were sanctioned for private use. Why should not these have been of Wycliffite origin? If anything was discovered in such a translation that good scholars considered wrong, it could be easily corrected. There was no mechanical multiplication of copies to perpetuate an error and spread it wide. Nay more, correction was expressly invited by the author of the second Wycliffite version, who is presumed to have been Purvey.

Objects of the episcopal licence.

In truth it is by no means clear that the episcopal licence was wanted particularly as a guarantee for the accuracy and soundness of the translation; for it was quite as much an object to prevent any translation whatever getting into the hands of those who might make bad use of it. There was no objection, apparently, to giving a licence to keep an English Bible to those who could be trusted to use it discreetly. After the control of such matters was handed over to Parliament by Henry VIII. this idea appears clearly in the Act "for the advancement of true religion,"[1] which forbade women, artificers, husbandmen, and the like, to read the Bible at all, but permitted noblemen, gentlemen, and even merchants to read it quietly in their families; also noblewomen and gentlewomen might read it to themselves privately. Statutes like this, rough and clumsy in their regulations, must undoubtedly have been intended to give at least plausible effect to sentiments which had been always in the public mind; and no doubt the Act simply attempted to do what the Church had for a long time done with much greater delicacy. It was at the instigation of the friars, apparently, that this policy was originally adopted; and it would seem that even before the decree of Oxford many of the secular clergy complained of those orders for collecting and virtually imprisoning

[1] Statute 34 and 35 Hen. VIII. cap. 1.

"the books of Holy Writ" by putting them "in treasury."[1]

The evidences, then, would seem to lead to the following conclusions:—The Church was not wholly opposed to the use of vernacular translations, for such translations actually existed, even before Wycliffe's, at least of separate books of Scripture. But it did not favour the use of such translations except as commentaries. A whole Bible, moreover, in the English language, as distinguished from Anglo-Saxon, could hardly have existed before Wycliffe's time, or have been much required, although there was no express prohibition of such an undertaking till Bishop Arundel's constitution, which, however, did not forbid the attempt, but only required that the work should be produced under episcopal supervision. That which made Wycliffe's translation so objectionable in the eyes of his contemporaries was not corrupt renderings or anything liable to censure in the text, but simply the fact that it was composed for the general use of the laity, who were encouraged to interpret it in their own way without reference to their spiritual directors. To the possession by worthy laymen of licensed translations the Church was never opposed; but to place such a weapon as an English Bible in the hands of men who had no regard for authority, and who would use it without being instructed how to use it properly, was dangerous not only to the souls of those who read, but to the peace and order of the Church.

The question between the Church and the followers of Wycliffe thus became simply a question between submission to authority and the interpretation of Scripture, not merely as a rule of faith, but of conduct also, by the individual judgment. And if the latter principle were to prevail, not only would the Church have no authority at all, but civil government

[1] See Jack Upland's poem in Wright's *Political Poems*, ii. 32.

itself would be left at the mercy of private systems of ethics. The case of Wycliffe's lay followers, however, should be distinguished from that of Wycliffe himself and that of learned divines like Hus and Jerome of Prague, who spread his doctrines in Bohemia. For these were at least well equipped for the conflict on which they entered with such melancholy results, whereas the lay followers of Wycliffe in England were men who naturally had no particular right to contradict the decisions of the learned. And as churchmen, better disciplined and with superior education, yielded more and more—whether from entire conviction or for fear of consequences, or simply because they could not help it—to the decisions laid down by authority, the Lollards in England, in the second stage of their history, came generally to be known as the lay party in the Church. Erratic clergymen, indeed, had no longer such power for mischief. Priests, even of irreproachable character, could not preach in any diocese but their own without leave of the bishop, and the law was strictly enforced. By Archbishop Arundel's constitution the admission of an unauthorised preacher in any church or churchyard or adjoining places involved an interdict *ipso facto* on the church or place.[1] Thus irregularities like those of Swynderby were no longer possible; and it is no wonder that after they lost the support of a powerful knight like Oldcastle we hear little for some time of heretical clergymen.

Restraints on preaching.

But the Church at large was putting her house in order as well as the Church in England. At the very time that Oldcastle was creating so much disturbance here, the Council of Constance was doing its best to terminate the Great Schism which had been the distress of Christendom for nearly forty years. For more than a century, indeed, the Papacy had been existing under abnormal conditions, and scarcely had

[1] Wilkins, iii. 316.

the "Babylonish captivity" at Avignon been put an end to when another line of Avignon popes was started in opposition to a newly elected Pope at Rome. After more than twenty years an attempt was made to set matters right by the election of Alexander V. at the Council of Pisa in 1409. But it really made things worse, as neither of the two rival popes would fulfil his obligation to abdicate, so there were three popes now instead of two. And though Alexander V. died the very next year, the infamous John XXIII. was elected to succeed him, while the two rivals who had been deposed at Pisa each refused to give way. It was in this state of matters that the Council of Constance met in November 1414. Next year it deposed Pope John and received the abdication of Gregory XII.; and in 1417, having pronounced Benedict XIII. contumacious and schismatical, it elected Martin V., whose authority was still disputed by Benedict, and indeed by another anti-pope after him, until the year 1429. So the Council of Constance, though it had done much to bring Christendom again under one head, was obliged to leave its work incomplete when, after having sat for nearly three years and a half, it at last came to an end in April 1418. Nevertheless it had made provision for the further regulation of the Church in time to come by the assembling of successive councils at fixed intervals, the first to take place five years later, the second seven years after that, and subsequent ones every ten years. The idea clearly was that the government of the Church was not an absolute monarchy, but that its head must listen from time to time to what the representatives of different countries had to say to him. How this idea was gradually abandoned and gave way to that of a spiritual autocracy, we shall have occasion to see hereafter.

The Council of Constance.

But the Council of Constance had much other business besides the claims of rival popes to dispose

of. The peace and unity of the Church were naturally a first object. Its purification in morals was to have been another. But its purification in doctrine was felt to be more urgent (as it certainly was more easy), and its action in this matter demands our attention here, because it was from this council that the doctrines of Wycliffe met with their final and authoritative condemnation. The sentence was pronounced on the 4th May 1415, and the council decreed that his bones should be dug up and burned. After which it proceeded to deal with two living followers of Wycliffe, whose fate produced a far greater commotion than any sentence pronounced upon the dead. These were the Bohemians, John Hus and Jerome of Prague.

Bohemia was a rich and fertile country, cut off from the adjoining lands by mountain ranges on every side, and inhabited by a Slavonic race who spoke a language of their own. It was a kingdom by itself, proud of its national life, and continually jealous of German ascendency. The last king, Charles, who became the Emperor Charles IV., had enlarged and beautified his capital, Prague, which he had made an archbishopric independent of Mainz, and the seat of a flourishing university. His reign was looked back to as the golden time of Bohemia. A few years after his death his youngest daughter, Anne, became the queen of our King Richard II.—that queen whose premature death he so bitterly bewailed. From this connection there arose a considerable intercourse between England and Bohemia, of which one result was that the writings of Wycliffe were studied on the banks of the Moldau as they were nowhere else in continental Europe. The teaching of Hus was simply the teaching of Wycliffe, and, as in Wycliffe's own case, it meant no real disloyalty to the Church—at least, as he understood the Church's authority and functions. As for Jerome of Prague, he had actually been in England, had studied at Oxford, and had tran-

Wycliffite teaching in Bohemia.

scribed some of Wycliffe's treatises, which he brought home with him to Bohemia. Other Bohemians, too, had done the like, of whom one Nicholas Faulfisch is particularly noted; and so, we may presume, it happens that at this day there are more MSS. of Wycliffe's Latin writings at Vienna and at Prague than we have in England, where, probably, more were destroyed than in Bohemia. For there was much in Wycliffe's teaching, especially in his desire to popularise the Bible in the vernacular speech of his country, which awoke peculiar sympathy in a nation such as the Bohemians.[1]

In fact, it created a very serious revolution. Hus became not only a religious leader, but the chief representative of Bohemian nationality as opposed to German ascendency. He was a favourite at Court and confessor to Queen Sophia. By his influence with King Wenceslaus he procured such a change in the condition of the university of Prague as led to the withdrawal of thousands of Germans, who, going back to their own country, founded a new university at Leipzig, and resorted to other seats of learning also, leaving Prague sadly diminished in European influence, and Bohemia ill spoken of over the whole of Germany. Nor was this all. He went on to defy an interdict of Pope Alexander V., who had condemned the doctrines of Wycliffe, and he appealed from the sovereign pontiff to Christ and the coming Council. He also opposed the indulgences proclaimed for a crusade against Ladislaus of Naples, and he pronounced three young men to be saints who had suffered death for crying out in church that these indulgences were a lie. The young men may have been right in their feeling, but this was rather strong; and the position which Hus took up against established authority at length alienated even King Wenceslaus. In short, Bohemia was torn asunder by

John Hus.

[1] *Æneæ Sylvii Opp.*, p. 103; *English Historical Review*, vii. 306-7.

his preaching, and he did not mend matters, before he came to Constance, by a treatise which he wrote "on the Church," and on which he was examined there in prison. For his "Church" was the Church only of those predestined to eternal life, whom nobody, of course, could name; so that external authority weighed with him but little.

I need not recount in detail what befell him and his friend Jerome at Constance. He came to the Council without even waiting for his promised safe-conduct from the Emperor, to vindicate the principles in which he believed so firmly; and Sigismund, having given him this guarantee, was very angry when he found that they had put him in gaol. But the crucial question was whether he could successfully defend those principles, and whether, if he failed, he would submit to the Council. He took up a position which looked anything but obstinate; he was willing enough to be corrected if his errors were pointed out. But then he meant, if they were proved erroneous by Scripture, for that was the only final authority that he admitted. And whether it be true, as his partisans maintained, that he had not a fair trial is a question that need hardly be discussed. No trial is fair in the eyes of those who dispute the authority of the tribunal. The whole of the proceedings turned really on the question of authority in matters of faith and practice. So the final issue was inevitable; for there could be no doubt that the effect of his teaching was fatal to the authority, not only of the Council, but of the Church itself as a visible and organised society. Even Sigismund, who had been so angry at the violation of his safe-conduct when they first put him in prison, declared that he had no notion of protecting a heretic who had not justified his doctrines and would not submit to the decisions of the Council. For it was to do either the one thing or the other that he had come to Constance, and he was held to

have done neither. So he was duly condemned and burned. His fate raised a storm of indignation in Bohemia. But it terrified for a while his friend Jerome, who at first recanted, but, later on, mustered courage to face the fire himself. And the fortitude of both victims at the last commanded the admiration even of papal courtiers. Their ashes were thrown into the lake lest they should be treasured as relics. But the very earth on which they were burned was carried off and venerated.[1]

Burning of Hus and of Jerome of Prague.

The Bohemian nobles got up a memorial to the Council denying with strange emphasis that heresy prevailed in Bohemia, and yet, at the same time, defying excommunication. Even before they wrote, however, heresies had sprung up there abundantly, more than Hus himself had cared for. During his absence at Constance his friend Jakaubek had instituted in Bohemia the practice of communion in both kinds, which he himself, on hearing of it, agreed to rather than approved. But the Council passed a decree in favour of the ancient practice of the Church in this matter. The news of Hus's death, however, animated the men of Prague with a spirit of defiance. The new practice was adopted with greater fervour. It was opposed with a like fervour. Riots took place both in the city and in the country round about; churches and monasteries were overthrown, such as were not excelled for splendour in all Europe.[2] The death of Wenceslaus in 1419 only made matters worse; for he left the kingdom to his brother the Emperor Sigismund, who at first was wanted elsewhere to defend Hungary against the Turks, and when he came to his new kingdom soon lost all control of it. The sects became more extreme. Zizka fortified the hill which they called Mount Tabor and defeated the army of Sigismund, who was soon driven out of Bohemia. But the victorious Hussites

Sects in Bohemia.

[1] *Æneæ Sylvii Opp.*, 105.

[2] *Ibid.*, 106.

became more divided among themselves. The more moderate body, called Calixtines or Utraquists, who remained within the city of Prague, differed mainly from the Church in the practice of communion in both kinds. The Taborites differed from these in rejecting transubstantiation, and showing generally less respect for authority. A third sect, called the Adamites, because they were content to live without clothes, became an abomination to both the others and were exterminated by Zizka. But Zizka also held his own against Sigismund, and even after his death in 1424, though the Hussites became more divided than ever, other leaders continued for some time to maintain the opposition to the Germans, and also to repeated crusades which had been proclaimed over Europe against them.

We shall have to say more about the Bohemians and about General Councils by and by. Meanwhile we may return to England. During the sitting of the Council of Constance the attention of the clergy there was not by any means engrossed by Lollardy to the exclusion of other subjects. On the 1st July 1416, the same day as that in which he addressed his pastoral letter to the Bishop of London for local inquiries, twice a year, touching heresies, Archbishop Chichele in another letter took notice of the fact that there was a good deal of dissatisfaction at the way the bishops and other ecclesiastics exercised their jurisdiction touching the goods of deceased persons. Administration of such property was at that time and long after, most naturally confided to ecclesiastical judges, who determined the just claims of surviving relations and dependants, whether the deceased had made a will or not, and how his will was to be interpreted, thus putting an end to many quarrels by decisions which could be respected as those of men accustomed to deal with questions of equity and justice. The Primate, accord-

Chichele's acts as Archbishop.

ingly, in the letter referred to, lays down certain regulations of procedure in such matters with the view of establishing clear principles and preventing interested parties from obtaining undue advantages.[1] This is, no doubt, a matter somewhat apart from our general subject here; yet, as will be seen hereafter, it is not entirely alien to questions which will crop up again in connection with the great movement against ecclesiastical jurisdiction more than a hundred years later.

In 1417 the Archbishop was occupied in endeavouring to meet complaints about the state of the universities and the difficulty of procuring promotion in the Church for their worthy sons.[2] But of these matters and some others that came before him later, touching outrages in particular churches and churchyards, it is unnecessary to speak. Nor need I dwell upon the prayers and litanies ordered during Henry V.'s last expedition into France to protect his army, not only from the designs of his enemies, but from the operations of necromancers.[3] Such things may be worth noting, but we cannot pause to discuss them. Our main subject is Lollardy; and apparently Lollardy was now beginning to decline. Before Oldcastle's arrest in Wales we find one of his chaplains, named Robert Chapel or Holbeche, and another priest named John Barton, mentioned by Foxe as having been convented before Convocation in 1416 and compelled to abjure. Besides which cases the same authority mentions a number of others most of which are undoubtedly twelve years later.[4] In the reign of Henry V., apparently, there were not many martyrdoms after Oldcastle's day; but we know of a few recantations from the records of Convocation. In 1419 there were presented before that body at St. Paul's four chaplains: the first of whom, Richard

[1] Wilkins, iii. 377.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 381-4.
[3] *Op. cit.*, 392, 393.
[4] Foxe, iii. 535-41.

Walker, was obliged to confess that he had practised magic arts and been a fortune-teller; for which he had to do penance in Cheap, his two books of magic hung, the one at his neck, the other behind his back, till they were taken from him when he reached the south side of St. Paul's Cathedral and cast into the fire. Two of the other chaplains, Ralph Owtrede and William Browne, abjured their heresies. The third, named Richard Wiche, of whom we shall speak more fully hereafter, had already been condemned as a heretic by Walter Skirlaw, the late Bishop of Durham, and had given new offence, for which he was committed to prison.[1]

Bishop Repingdon reproves the neglect of old observances.

It is, however, a sign that Lollardy was still carrying on the war against ancient devotion, that Bishop Repingdon felt obliged in 1419 to issue a strong admonition to the clergy of Lincoln, many of whom neglected to attend the processions long observed on Corpus Christi Day and the Sunday after, in which the sacrament was solemnly borne from the church of Wigford, in the suburbs, to the cathedral. The feast of Corpus Christi was instituted in honour of that sacrament, which it was the special function of priests to consecrate. It became them, therefore, to take part in these processions, duly arrayed in surplices, and to show an example of devout bearing to the people. And to all who so joined in these solemnities the bishop gave an indulgence of forty days as often as they did so.[2]

In 1420, on Palm Sunday, one William James, M.A., appeared of his own free will before Archbishop Chichele to abjure Lollardy, of which he had been many years defamed, and for which he had suffered imprisonment. The Archbishop allowed him to go in freedom and walk about at his pleasure within the archiepiscopal manor of Maidstone, where he might have free intercourse with all who came to him, and might practise as a physician, dispensing medicine to

[1] Wilkins, iii. 394, 395. [2] *Op. cit.*, 396.

those who desired it.[1] Another heretic, a priest named William Taylor, who was brought before Convocation first in May 1421,[2] was an old and notable offender.[3] He had already confessed his heresies before Archbishop Chichele at Lambeth on Monday, 12th February 1419 [-20]. He had, in fact, before that been impeached before Archbishop Arundel, and being excommunicated for contumacy in non-appearance, had remained under that excommunication for about fourteen years, when Chichele gave him the absolution that he desired on condition of his appearance before next Convocation to do penance. He was accordingly brought before that body on Saturday, 24th May 1421, by Philip, Bishop of Worcester,[4] to whose custody he had been committed, and in whose diocese at Bristol he had written and maintained these heresies :—

William Taylor.

1. "That whoso hangs about his neck any writing, by so doing takes away the honour due only to God and gives it to the devil."

2. "That Christ ought not to be prayed to in respect of His humanity."

3. "That the Saints in heaven are not to be prayed to by the people."[5]

Taylor, however, denied that he had preached such doctrines, or even held them with the intention of defending them; but he had written and communicated the second and third *per modum communicationis*, and in justification of his opinion produced from his bosom certain articles and sayings of doctors. He was made to withdraw, and a consultation took place. The articles were delivered to the Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and to Dr. John

[1] Wilkins, iii. 397. [2] *Op. cit.*, 399.

[3] He is called *hæresiarcha eorum* by Walden in *De Sacramentis*, f. 9, col. 2, ed. Salamanca, 1557.

[4] Bishop Philip Morgan, afterwards Bishop of Ely, an able diplomatist, who nevertheless seems to have had a strong sense of his duty as a bishop. See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

[5] Comp. Walden, *De Sacramentalibus* (1556), f. 217, col. 4, n. 5.

Langdon, a monk of Christchurch, Canterbury, to deliberate upon and communicate with Taylor. The result was that he abjured them on the following Monday. His penance was then considered, and as the offence was very serious, it was agreed by the whole Synod that he should be imprisoned for life. But the Archbishop and his suffragans perceiving tokens of repentance in him, mitigated it to this, that if he should find security satisfactory to the Chancellor of England, that henceforth he would never maintain an opinion contrary to the determination of the Church of Rome, the Bishop of Worcester should have power to release him.

Of this clemency he appears to have availed himself, and to have been liberated. Unfortunately he soon gave new offence, and on the 11th February 1422 [-3] he was brought again before the Archbishop and a body of divines at a house called "The Hostry," belonging to the Black Friars of London. Some sheets were produced which he acknowledged to have been written by himself since his abjuration, and communicated by him to a priest at Bristol named Thomas Smyth. In these he maintained as orthodox the position that all prayer for any supernatural gift should be directed to God alone, and claimed that this was really supported by an authority which Smyth had cited against it. This proposition, although he did not mean altogether to condemn prayer to saints, or to deny that the dead and living profited by their merits, was condemned along with three other positions of his on the 25th of the month, and a definitive sentence was pronounced against the unhappy man at St. Paul's on the 27th.[1] On the 1st March he was degraded from the priesthood, and next day he was burnt in Smithfield.[2]

Burnt in Smithfield.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 404-13.

[2] Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, 75, 128; Gregory's *Chronicle* in *Collection of a London Citizen* (edited by me for the Camden Society), 149. The date "second" is correct as to Taylor's martyrdom, notwithstanding the

He was doubtless one who, in the age of laxity immediately after Wycliffe, had ventilated very free opinions, and though afterwards appalled at his own temerity, could not bring himself back to the orthodox standard. Walden, who was present at his first examination before Archbishop Arundel, says that on that occasion he declined to acknowledge the host as anything more than "blessed bread," and when asked to do reverence to it, declared outrageously, "Why, a spider is more worthy of reverence." "And straightway," says Walden, "a great spider of horrid aspect came down from the roof by its thread to the very mouth of the blasphemer, which it sought hard to enter, and could scarcely be kept away by the hands of many others. There was present on the occasion Thomas, Duke of Exeter, then Chancellor of the kingdom, who saw the prodigy. And the Archbishop rising declared to all the people what the avenging hand of the Lord had done to the blasphemer."[1] It is not difficult to imagine here a rather unusual incident, a little exaggerated in the telling from the way it affected devout beholders.

The date of Taylor's burning was in the first year of Henry VI. But let us go back a little. On the 11th July of the year preceding (1422) one William White, chaplain, was produced in Convocation as a transgressor of ordinances. For he had preached at Tenterden without licence, and had been apprehended and kept in prison by the Archbishop in consequence. He admitted his offence, but said he had been absolved by the Archbishop at Oxford. He confessed, however, that he was much defamed of heresy by good and grave men, and, being required, he made a full abjuration.[2]

William White.

footnote. But it is clear that Gregory followed some authority which had previously recorded Taylor's degradation on the 1st, and he has wrongly repeated "the foresaid second day" instead of the "foresaid first day" as the date of the treaty of Pont Meulan.

[1] T. Waldensis, *Doctrinale*, ii. 386-7 (Blanciotti's ed., Venice, 1757-9).

[2] Wilkins, iii. 404.

Another point of interest in the last year of Henry V. is that the King himself proposed to a provincial chapter of the Black Monks—that is to say, the great Order of the Benedictines—which met then at Westminster, the necessity of reforming some irregularities that seemed incompatible with the true observance of their rule. The suggestions of royalty were generally to the effect that abbots ought to give more assiduous attendance to the divine offices in their own convents, and not live apart in their own manors for more than three months in the year, nor ride with such sumptuous equipages or great array of servants; that strict accounts should be taken yearly of the property of each monastery, and given in to the chapter at Michaelmas; that uniformity of habits should be everywhere required, and excesses corrected, as sleeves were commonly worn hanging down a great length, often to the ground. And various other provisions were advocated about things such as the periodical blood-lettings in use, and for allowing some slight relief from fish-eating, especially in monasteries far from the sea. The King's proposals, of course, met with very respectful consideration from the chapter. They must have been originally suggested by members of the Order itself. But the chapter proposed modifications, and gave reasons for them; and, finally, statutes were passed to give effect to the King's object.[1]

In 1424, the second year of Henry VI., there was another Convocation at St. Paul's, in which a Grey Friar of Stamford, named John Russell, appeared under a decree of his bishop in visitation to answer the charge of having preached in English "an erroneous conclusion," and fixed on the door of St. Mary's church at Stamford a writing in which he declared himself ready to defend it. The "conclusion" was certainly not one to command the

[1] Wilkins, iii. 413-27.

sympathy of good men; for it was thus expressed, viz. that "a religious man" (*i.e.* a monk or friar) "may lie with a woman and not sin mortally." We may leave to casuists that which was, of course, the real question from an academical point of view, viz. whether the sin itself amounted to mortal sin; but to ventilate such a question in a sermon before an ordinary audience on a public festival day (for it was on the feast of Corpus Christi) was a gratuitous outrage on decency, which was absolutely inexcusable. In Convocation, however, Russell acknowledged his error and submitted to correction. As penance he was enjoined to revoke it on Advent Sunday following in the same church in which he had preached it.[1] The mildness of the punishment is remarkable.

Then a chaplain named John Wathe was compelled to confess a forgery of apostolic letters and received due punishment. He was mounted on a horse without a saddle, and, having the forged bulls hung about his neck, he rode through Cheap, Walbroke, and Watling Street, to the south door of St. Paul's with a paper hat on his head, on which every one might read the inscription, "Forger of apostolic letters." Then when he had reached the south door of St. Paul's the forged bulls were thrown into a fire and burnt to ashes. The offender then was taken into the church, and before the Archbishop as his judge swore that he would undergo the like penance in the city of Lincoln and at Grimsby, where he formerly dwelt, and whenever he entered any part of Lincoln diocese in future; also that he would as soon as possible petition the Holy See for absolution from the excommunication in which he was involved.[2]

Convocation then went on to pass regulations against certain abuses in connection with the publication of indulgences by "pardoners." These indulgences had come to be frequently forged; and the Synod

[1] Wilkins, iii. 428, 429, 431. [2] *Ibid.*

forbade that henceforth any pardoner should be admitted to proclaim them except in behalf of some one of three places, viz. the house of St. John's, commonly called "The Frary," St. Anthony's, or the Hospital of St. Thomas the Martyr at Rome. The pardoner was not to exceed his commission, but confine himself to the exact words given him in a schedule, and must not publish them to the interruption of divine service or of preaching in any church; and no such proctor was to be admitted without having been first presented to the Archbishop, and receiving sealed letters testimonial, both from him and from the bishop of the diocese to which he was sent. We may imagine the state of matters which provisions like these were intended to remedy.

The Synod after this was occupied with a demand made by councillors of the King for a subsidy, which was refused, notwithstanding repeated applications, on account of the poverty of the clergy.[1]

A.D. 1425. Convocation: Friar William Russell.

Next year, 1425, Convocation met again at St. Paul's, and had some further cases of heresy to deal with, of which the most celebrated was that of William Russell, Warden of the Minorites, or Grey Friars, of London. There were also two secular clergymen brought before them, who had been for years defamed of Lollardy, and had each abjured, but now made complete submission, and were liberated on finding security for their future good behaviour. But Russell's case, which was not one of ordinary Lollard teaching, created a much more serious stir. He had maintained, in a sermon at Paul's Cross, that personal tithes did not fall under divine law, at least the payment of them to a parish clergyman, and that any one could dispose of them to pious uses for the poor. This was clearly a doctrine favourable to the Mendicant Orders, to one of which Russell himself belonged; but it was injurious to the parochial

[1] Wilkins, iii. 429.

clergy, from whom many citizens of London had actually withheld their tithes in consequence of his sermon. Convocation held such teaching to be entirely erroneous, and Russell himself, failing to defend it before them, after a time submitted. He was then enjoined as his penance to abjure on the following Sunday in the same place where he had offended, between prayers and the beginning of the sermon. This, however, he failed to do. He withdrew, apparently, into his convent, neglected citations to appear again before Convocation, and was pronounced contumacious. The opinions of the universities were also taken against his doctrine of tithes. But he betook himself to Rome, where, process being begun against him, he had a day given to revoke his error. Instead of doing this, however, he broke prison and escaped. Judgment was then pronounced against him at Rome, and, returning to England, he was compelled to surrender himself to the custody of the Bishop of London. At last, in March 1428, he was obliged to make a public recantation at Paul's Cross, and on the day he did so his bishop was enjoined by the Primate to keep him thenceforth safely in prison.[1]

But this was not all. On returning from Rome early in 1426 he had gone back at first to his old convent, and reports of his reception by the brethren required investigation. Dr. Thomas Winchelsea, one of the most influential of the brethren, having been summoned, with three of the others, before Convocation, admitted that, on hearing of his arrival in London, he had gone thither in haste from Sheen; only he denied that it was to welcome him home again, but rather to turn him out. He was obliged, however, to confess further that Russell had remained a whole night within the house. He had been placed alone in a separate chamber, and had left for good about

[1] Wilkins, iii. 434-59.

four o'clock in the morning at the first opening of the gates; nor did Winchelsea know whither he had gone. The Archbishop then said this was enough to prove Winchelsea a receiver of a heretic. He submitted to the rebuke, and was ordered to attend on a Saturday two days later with his three brethren to hear further, when it was thought right by the bishops and clergy that Winchelsea, as the most famous doctor of his order, should read a paper at Paul's Cross in opposition to the doctrine that had been propounded there by Russell. The paper was delivered to him on Monday following, and being called again before the Synod on Tuesday, and asked if he was willing to read it next day, he said Yes, if some hard words in it were mended. This was agreed to, and he preached at Paul's Cross on the Wednesday to the effect required.[1]

In the midst of these proceedings this Convocation received a royal message, brought in by the Archbishop of York as Lord Chancellor and Lord Hungerford as Treasurer, which the former, as a spiritual person, was careful to introduce under three heads—"first and chiefly," exhorting them to all virtuous living, alleging authorities of certain doctors; second, commending to them the state of the kingdom; and, third (which, of course, was the real matter), requiring a subvention for the King's need on the coming over from France of the Regent Bedford, who could not go back to recover the King's rights without it. Eight days later a moiety of a tenth was voted for the purpose.[2]

I have been somewhat minute, as the reader will think, in reporting the proceedings of these Convocations, especially in matters of heresy; and yet what I have said is only a condensed summary of exceedingly lengthy records, which show, even by their tedious repetitions, the care taken by the

[1] Wilkins, iii. 459-61. [2] *Op. cit.*, 460-61.

Church authorities, while anxious to stop the propagation of error, to give every possible opportunity to an accused person of purging himself of imputations esteemed dangerous alike to ecclesiastical and to social order. For in truth the times were full of serious problems; and never was there more feeling of the need of some stable authority in Europe than at this period between the Council of Constance and that of Basel. The election of Martin V. at Constance had indeed been received almost everywhere with satisfaction. For it promised not only extinction of the schism, but other boons as well, if Bohemia were once quieted. Christendom was surely to be put at last under one government, papal influence would procure peace among nations, and the authority of Rome would be acknowledged everywhere in its fulness. Papal influence, doubtless, did but little to stay the conquering arms of Henry V. in France; but the Pope was delighted to hear that Henry fully intended to preserve the liberties of the Church in his new dominions, and also to restore them in England where they had been set aside by his predecessors. At least he had given a promise, a year before his death, as soon as he should get back from France, to call his Parliament in England to consider the question about abrogating certain laws passed in derogation of the rights of the Holy See.[1] But he died at Vincennes before he could return to England, and the Pope next pressed upon the council of his infant son the advisability not only of restoring peace to France, but also of abolishing a certain questionable statute[2] by which the freedom of the Church had long been oppressed.[3] What this statute was we shall see presently. Meanwhile the Pope had a sore grievance against Archbishop Chichele, who, in 1423,

Pope Martin V.

[1] Raynaldus, viii. 538.

[2] "De abolitione illius asserti statuti," suggesting that it was a sham statute passed by an usurped authority.

[3] Raynaldus, viii. 557.

had proclaimed indulgences to persons visiting Canterbury on pilgrimage—an usurpation of apostolic privileges which not unnaturally brought down upon him a severe reprimand.[1]

The Pope and Archbishop Chichele.

It is indeed rather surprising that an Archbishop of Canterbury should have thought himself competent to proclaim indulgences without reference to the Holy See. But the Pope's correspondence with Chichele about the statutes of Provisors and Præmunire is more surprising still. These statutes had been deliberately drawn up and approved by Parliament in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. to resist encroachments of the Holy See upon what had been always regarded as the just rights of kings and patrons in the matter of Church benefices. Even in the days of Edward I., the Parliament which he held at Carlisle in 1307, while it forbade the taxation of religious houses in England at the demand of their foreign heads,[2] had also made strong representations to the Pope himself on the multitude of papal provisions, which tended to exclude Englishmen from ecclesiastical promotions, especially deaneries, so necessary for the government of cathedral churches, which were freely bestowed upon aliens.[3] But the remonstrance seems to have had little effect. Forty-four years later Parliament found that these papal interferences were even carried farther, and that the Pope was endeavouring to keep in his own hands the disposal of the highest benefices in the kingdom, reserving first fruits and other profits upon them to himself. It therefore enacted that elections to episcopal and other dignities should be free, as they were intended to be when founded, and that all who possessed advowsons should present freely. And if there were any attempt by the Court of Rome to interfere with this freedom by reservation or pro-

[1] Raynaldus, viii. 573.

[2] Stat. 35 Edw. I. st. 1.

[3] *Rot. Parl.*, i. 207.

vision, the collations should go to the King, by whose ancestors the right of election had been originally given, on licence to choose (*congé d'élire*) being desired of him.[1] This was followed by the first statute of *præmunire* two years later (1353), to prevent people being called out of the realm in causes the cognisance of which belonged to the King's courts, and also to prevent judgments delivered in the King's courts being overruled elsewhere. That is to say, the object was to prevent any suits to Rome which might interfere with decisions in England. All persons who began such actions were to be warned to appear before the King's Council under penalty of outlawry and forfeiture of lands and goods.[2] These two Acts of Provisors and Præmunire were felt to be so important that they were strengthened by other two Acts of the same kind in the reign of Richard II.[3]

But these statutes were a sore grievance to Martin V., and the way he continued to speak of them in writing to young King Henry VI., his Council, and Archbishop Chichele, implied that he considered laws passed by an English Parliament of no validity at all if they came into conflict with the claims of the Papacy. He had sent to England on this subject Cardinal Cesarini, to whom a reply was made in the King's name that Parliament would be convoked as soon as possible, when the King would do what he could, and that there was no desire to detract from the rights and privileges of the Holy See. On receiving this answer the Pope wrote again to the young King on the 1st December 1426, and what he wrote was in the following terms :—

> How reasonable, dearest son, this delay is to be considered, let those judge who are at thy side to advise thee. For if the Holy See had demanded it now for the first time, perhaps it might be less grievously borne. But as the same petition

[1] Stat. 25 Edw. III. st. 4. [2] Stat. 27 Edw. III. st. 1.
[3] 13 Ric. II. st. ii. c. 2, and 16 Ric. II. c. 5.

has been urged by numerous nuncios in various Parliaments, and now you allege once more a Parliament, what else does it seem to intimate to men of understanding but a desire to put the matter further off? As if the disgrace of that statute had not already endured in thy kingdom for so many years past!

He goes on to say that, even if no one had asked for its abolition, all divine and human reason, and the authority alike of the Old and of the New Testament, of councils, of holy fathers, the decrees of popes and the *ritus et observantia* of the universal Church, condemned that statute [of Provisors] as most unjust. Other nations, too, murmured and spoke against it. "You honor St. Thomas," adds the Pope, "the martyr who died to defend the liberty of the Church. Why do you persecute and impugn that liberty? . . . In his time delinquent clerks were subjected to secular judgment. Now, without any crime, only because they go to the Vicar of Christ to obtain some ecclesiastical benefice, they have all their goods taken from them as sacrilegious persons, they are banished the kingdom, and under like pain they are forbidden to be received by others. And those who bring process of excommunication against any one of your kingdom, over and above the said penalties (shocking to say or hear) incur, in the words of that statute, penalty of life and members, and in some cases those who attempt anything against the statute are exposed as enemies of the King and kingdom to be taken and killed by anybody.[1] What can be worse? There is no one who cannot understand. No such statutes, we imagine, are passed against Jews or Saracens."

A day or two later he wrote to the Archbishop reproaching him as a negligent pastor who allowed the sheep to stray from the fold, and as a dumb dog who could not even bark when the wolf approached.

[1] Richard II.'s statute of provisors increased the penalties to this extent.

Had Chichele considered seriously his responsibility to the Eternal Judge? "Look at that royal statute, if it be rightly called a statute, or rightly royal. For how can that be a statute which is against the laws of God and the Church? How royal, which allows things instituted against what is written, *Honor Regis judicium diligit.* Consider, as a venerable brother and Christian bishop, if it be just or equitable, or to be kept by a Christian people." And the letter goes on to point out that by that "execrable statute" the King made laws over churches, benefices, clergy, and the ecclesiastical state, calling spiritual causes before him and his lay courts. Another brief was addressed to both the primates, in which the Archbishop of York was named first, telling them that they and some other bishops besides, did not blush to put their sickle in another man's crop, daring to dispose of benefices which were properly in the gift of the Holy See.[1]

The reader must not suppose that Pope Martin V., though a member of a branch of the powerful family of Colonna, was a man of extraordinary arrogance, putting forth unheard-of claims for the See of St. Peter's. Quite the reverse. By some estimates, at least, he was noted at his election as "the poorest and simplest of the Cardinals," a kindly man, but no politician.[2] He seems simply to have followed the traditions of the Papacy, and declared alike to kings, archbishops, and parliaments the full extent of their obligations to Rome. It was mere duty that made him censure the Archbishop so severely. But the Archbishop, for his part, following the customs of England, made matters worse still by appropriating the emoluments of cathedral sees during their vacancies and using them to oppose apostolic provisions.

[1] The letters above referred to will be found in Wilkins, iii. 480, 482, 471, not quite in chronological order, with others of a later date. The second letter is also printed by Burnet (vol. iv. 148, Pocock's edition).

[2] Creighton's *History of the Papacy*, ii. 101-2 (ed. 1905).

The Pope met this by a brief suspending him from the office of *legatus natus*, or legate in ordinary, attached to the archbishopric of Canterbury; whereupon in March and April 1427 he drew up appeals to the next General Council.[1]

The first of these appeals was dated on the 22nd March.[2] In it he professes only to fear that suspension or excommunication is intended against him, for as yet he knows nothing of the fact officially. The papal letters must have been withheld from him, or their messenger detained. A week later, however, there repaired to him at his palace at Canterbury the papal nuncio, Dr. John de Obizis, and presented the bulls, which the Archbishop carried with him to his manor of Forde. Next day, the 30th March, he received a visit there from Geoffrey Lowther, Constable of Dover Castle, sent specially by Duke Humphrey, the Protector, to arrest any bulls lately transmitted to England, as he had heard on trustworthy authority that bulls derogatory to the King's right had come to the hands of the Archbishop; and the messenger warned him under grave penalties to transmit them to the Protector. Then eight days later, on the 7th April, one Watts, called a "grocer,"[3] came to Forde and presented the Archbishop with a King's writ, commanding him to refrain from publishing any such bulls that might come to him before Michaelmas, but to keep them safely and transmit them to the council without delay.[4] Moreover, to prevent any further mischief, the Pope's collector who had brought the bulls was put in prison for delivering them against

Papal bulls arrested.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 484, 485. Comp. note in Pocock's *Burnet*, iv. 148.

[2] The date in the record is March 22, 1427, *secundum cursum et computationem Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, which would properly mean 1428 of the historic year beginning in January. But this is certainly a mistake. The further additions, Indiction V. and tenth year of Martin V., remove all doubt.

[3] According to Murray's Dictionary this word originally meant "one who buys and sells in the gross," *i.e.* a wholesale dealer, and there is early authority for the expression "groser of fysche"; but I have a slight suspicion that it sometimes meant an "engrosser" of legal documents.

[4] Wilkins, 485, 486.

the King's statutes, and he was not liberated, even on bail, at the request of the lords spiritual, until he had been made to take an oath before the council not to attempt anything against the King or the statutes of the realm.[1]

That was the way it was done. There was no intention, of course, to show disrespect for the Church, which was the supreme director of consciences, the infallible guide to all truth and righteousness. But the wicked world and its wicked rulers had their own laws in their own kingdoms, and were not going to allow the interests of those kingdoms, as understood by them, to be set aside by any theoretical view of abstract right. And really the preacher of righteousness, be his gospel sound or unsound, stands a very poor chance in this world in opposition to the self-interest of strong men and princes. So even bishops and archbishops, if they mean to be accounted loyal subjects, must find some means of accommodating themselves to the requirements of temporal rulers. The Archbishop afterwards followed up his first appeal with further appeals; and he was not without supporters. The University of Oxford wrote to the Pope in his favour; a number of the temporal lords did the same[2]; and the Commons in Parliament petitioned the King to intervene in his behalf.[3]

Chichele himself had already written to the Pope on the 10th March, not only in his own vindication, but also in that of the Protector, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, who, he understood, had been denounced to his Holiness along with him as the two principal opponents of the Church's liberty.[4] But the Pope answered him on the 6th May that he had heard nothing against Gloucester, and that for the Archbishop the only real way to vindicate himself was by deeds, not words. He must do his very utmost to

[1] Nicolas's *Acts of the Privy Council*, iii. 268. [2] Wilkins, 476, 478.
[3] *Rot. Parl.*, iv. 322. [4] Wilkins, 472.

procure the abolition of that "execrable" statute, and censure in season and out of season all those who observed it. Moreover, the Pope must correct a very improper observation which he was told the Archbishop had made, that the Holy See only sought to abolish the statute for the sake of raising money. How little the Pope was moved by that consideration might be seen by the nuncios he had frequently sent to England, and the offers he had made through them, which were such as no previous Pope had made to any other nation.[1] In October the Pope wrote earnestly on the subject once more in separate briefs to the King, to the Parliament of England, and to Chichele, as he understood that the promised Parliament was now about to meet.[2]

The final result of it all was that on Friday the 30th Jan. 1427[-8] the Archbishop, with his brother of York and five other bishops and the abbots of Westminster and Reading, left the House of Lords and proceeded to the refectory of Westminster Abbey, where the Commons were assembled, to whom Chichele declared in English the cause of their coming. He protested that he did not mean in anything he was going to say to derogate from the rights of the Crown, and, taking for his text the words "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," he declared to them what was due to ecclesiastical jurisdiction and what to that of Cæsar. He then laid before them the question of the abolition of the Statute of Provisors, showed what might be said for the Pope's contention, and urged them for the weal of their souls and the peace of the kingdom to weigh the matter carefully, warning them, even with tears, of the danger of ecclesiastical censures. He and the

Parliament asked to abolish the Statute of Provisors.

[1] Wilkins, 473, 474; Raynaldus, ix. 57.

[2] The first in Burnet, iv. 155, also in Wilkins, 479; the second in Raynaldus, ix. 56, also in Burnet, iv. 157, and Wilkins, 479; the third in Wilkins, 480.

other prelates then withdrew, and a notarial instrument was drawn up to record what he had done—doubtless as evidence to satisfy the Pope that he could do nothing more.[1] His own and his brethren's entreaties seem to have been utterly ignored, as nothing whatever is said about the incident in the Rolls of Parliament. The action of the prelates, indeed, was not at all parliamentary.

There is an appearance of little-mindedness in the age in matters both ecclesiastical and secular. For, apart from the elements of confusion in Europe generally, England was labouring under the curse of an infant King, with a Council quarrelling with each other and filling town and country with feuds. Everyone knows about the bitter dissensions between "the good Duke Humphrey" of Gloucester and Bishop Henry Beaufort of Winchester, afterwards cardinal. Duke Humphrey was the favourite of the London citizens, while Beaufort, whose diocese included Southwark, across the water, had retainers enough[2] at hand when, in 1425, Gloucester ordered the Mayor to keep London Bridge shut against him and his men. I need but remind the reader how the Duke of Bedford had to come over to make peace between them, and how the charges of Gloucester against Beaufort were made and answered next year at Leicester at "the Parliament of Bats." A sort of pacification was made; after which Beaufort resigned the chancellorship. In March 1427 he went to Calais, where he received his cardinal's hat, and thence proceeded as papal legate to Germany to lead an expedition against the Hussites of Bohemia.

Duke Humphrey and Bishop Beaufort.

Of the two rivals there is no doubt that he was the real statesman. He had been at the Council of Constance, and had promoted the election of Martin V.,

[1] Wilkins, 483; Burnet, iv. 159 (compare the editor's note at p. 148).

[2] Not men of his own diocese merely, if, indeed, at all. They were "of the counties of Lancaster and Chester, and of other countries" (Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, 130).

who would have made him a cardinal, it is said, even there if Henry V. would have suffered it. He had assisted Henry V., however, with large loans, which could not have come merely out of the revenues of his see, showing that he fully understood the value of money. Even in the days of Henry IV. he had received his bishopric of Winchester by papal provision—an example of that practice which the English Government was generally seeking to control. And if English government sought to limit papal influence in matters ecclesiastical from a purely political point of view, it cannot be said that papal influence itself was truly spiritualising. No man understood better than Beaufort the powers of this world, and if he helped his King with money, he was ready to help the Church also with armed battalions. He proved, indeed, a most gallant leader in the invasion of Bohemia, and withstood to the last a panic which seized his German host when it fled before Procopius, Zizka's successor, before Mies in 1427. But in spite of his valour this crusade was abortive; and another, for the same object, as we shall see, which he organised after his return, proved still more so.

Meanwhile, what about the heretics in England? It did not strengthen Archbishop Chichele's hands in dealing with them when he was met with papal rebukes for not setting aside the laws of the kingdom at the Pope's command. But the Archbishop clearly did his best. The Pope, indeed, was much more concerned about the heretics in Bohemia, and on the 10th May 1428 Conzo de Zwola presented bulls to the Council, with a message desiring the aid of the King and kingdom for an army to exterminate that perverse set of men. He received an answer from the council which is not recorded, but no doubt it was a most respectful one.[1] In July the Archbishop opened another Convocation at St. Paul's, which he said in

[1] Nicolas, *Acts of P.C.*, iii. 295.

his address that he had convoked "for the tranquillity of the Church, the conservation of the faith, and the destruction and weakening of heretics who were now increasing in strength more than usually." The nuncio was brought into the chapter-house, and related how the Church and all good Catholics were harassed and persecuted by the heretics of Bohemia.[1] Already, indeed, as we learn from a contemporary writer, the nuncio had proclaimed his "pardon against heretics . . . in the city of Prague; the which pardon was that men should every Sunday in the beginning of every month go in procession with seven psalms and the litany, and they should have a hundred days of pardon unto the same procession. The King and the Queen (*i.e.* the Queen mother) and all other lords, spiritual and temporal, went on procession through London the second day of June."[2] So Convocation was very well aware of the business on which the nuncio was sent before he had declared it to them. But the clergy do not seem to have been eager to tax themselves to put down disorders abroad while they had difficulties enough with heretics at home, and the King's ministers were urging them for a subsidy besides. Three persons from each of the two houses were appointed to receive and audit subsidies: first, for those to be sent to coming General Councils; and, secondly, for the aid granted for the prosecution of William Russell. Then, by and by, a number of heretics were brought before the assembled divines.

A.D. 1428 Convocation and the Pope's nuncio.

First, there was one John Jourdelay, brought in by servants of the Bishop of Lincoln as a man grievously suspected, because he kept for a long time a book full of heresies, and had not delivered it to the ordinary within the time prescribed by the statute of Leicester. He at once abjured. Then came Katharine Dertford, a spinster, much suspected of heresy, who had hid

Heretics before Convocation.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 493.

[2] Gregory's *Chronicle*, 162.

herself from examination, and to whom a great concourse of people was in the habit of resorting. Articles were objected to her touching the sacrament of the altar, the worship of images, pilgrimages, and so forth, which she declined to answer because she had only been taught the Creed and the Decalogue. She was delivered to the Abbot of Chertsey, who was vicar-general of the Bishop of Winchester (Cardinal Beaufort) during his absence abroad. Next there was brought from the Tower in chains, Robert, whose surname is not given, Rector of Heggeley (Hedgerley in Bucks), in Lincoln diocese, who had been confessor to the notorious thief William Wawe, hanged at Tyburn a year before.[1] Being much suspected of "error and heresy," the keeper of the Tower delivered him up to the Archbishop's custody by writ of the King, and the Archbishop passed him on to that of the Bishop of Lincoln. Articles were objected to him of the sacrament, pilgrimages, images, and whether it was lawful for spiritual men to have temporal possessions. To all which he made dubious answers with seeming irony (*ficte et dubitative ac semper quasi ridendo respondebat*), except that, after some hesitation, he made a clear answer about the sacrament. After over an hour's examination he was ordered to withdraw, and the bishop was enjoined to keep him in prison and have him examined more fully, and

[1] See Gregory's *Chronicle*, 161. Pretty full notices of Wawe will be found in Amundesham, i. 17, 11, 12, 14; ii. 132. He had been outlawed "for divers treasons and felonies," and committed to the Marshalsea prison; but he, with other robbers confined there, broke prison, invaded churches and nunneries, and robbed passengers on the highways. £100 was offered for his capture, or 100 marks with pardon to any of his accomplices. He by and by took asylum in Beaulieu Abbey, and the abbot was called upon to produce his franchises, and show if he had a right to detain such a "heretic and traitor and common highwayman and public thief" (Nicolas's *Acts of Privy Council*, iii. 257, 268-9). The order of these last epithets is instructive. Heresy, which in this case was a violation of sacred places, was regarded as a crime of far deeper dye than mere treason and highway robbery. He was captured at length by Sir John Radclyf, who, being a knight, doubtless did not apply for the £100 reward, but a warrant was issued to the Exchequer to pay him £60 (*Op. cit.* 312).

then to proceed against him as his ordinary. Four days later he was brought up again, when he abjured and promised to denounce any heretical books in future to his ordinary.[1]

Afterwards there was brought in William Harvey of Tenterden, who had fled to other parts in the city of London. He acknowledged that he had read several books of Holy Scripture in English, and had been often in secret conventicles among men suspected of Lollardy. He abjured, but not being able to find sufficient surety, was remitted to the custody of his bishop. Then came John Calle, a London chaplain, noted for heresy and error. He refused to confess anything amiss; but there was found with him an English book of the Gospels, well written, called "the *Book of the New Law*," in English, and he was committed to the Bishop of London for examination. The session was then prorogued with an exhortation by the Archbishop to his brethren to make diligent inquiry before it met again about Lollards and heretics, especially concerning certain persons in their several dioceses, lists of whose names he had delivered to them three days before.[2]

The sittings were resumed after nearly four months' vacation on Friday the morrow of St. Martin, 12th November 1428, when the Archbishop was commissioned to go and meet Cardinal Beaufort, now returned from abroad, and conduct him to Westminster. The Cardinal had now come, after his valorous conduct in Bohemia, to raise an English force against the heretics there, with what result we shall see presently. On Monday the 16th the Archbishop declared to Convocation the causes of their being again assembled, chief of which was to counteract the malice of the heretics, which was daily increasing in the province

Cardinal Beaufort's return.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 493-4.

[2] *Op. cit.*, 494. These cases are erroneously given by Foxe as of Henry V.'s time.

of Canterbury. How best to deal with the growing evil seems really to have been at this time a little perplexing. Suggestions were made and met with objections. Among other things it was proposed that when the bishops of the province, as ordinaries, sent any heretics or Lollards to the houses of the "religious," that is to say, of monks or friars, to be kept as prisoners, these should accept their custody for the time assigned to them. But this was altogether so unusual that the "religious" made a stand against it, and asked for repeated delays to consult lawyers, who probably supported them in their objections.[1]

On the 23rd Conzo appeared again with his fellow-nuncio Jacopo, and laid before Convocation a correspondence he had had with the Pope, who asked for a whole tenth from the clergy in England for the war against the Bohemians. This, however, was opposed as grievous and unaccustomed; and consideration of the subject was deferred till the 26th, when new cases of heresy came before them. Mr. David Price, vicar-general of the Bishop of London, at that time absent abroad, brought in Ralph Mungyn, priest, who had been four months detained in the bishop's prison. Articles against him were produced by Price, who showed that by lawful inquisition he had been for twenty years defamed of heresy and Lollardy, both in the University of Oxford and elsewhere. Asked if he would abjure, he said he thought it not right to do so, and was recommitted to custody.

Ralph Mungyn.

On the 30th, an Italian merchant entered and presented several bulls for the confirmation of the faith and resistance of heretics who in various parts of the world were increasing more than ever. On the 2nd December Ralph Mungyn was brought in again, when there were not only a considerable number of bishops present, but divines of each of the four Mendicant Orders had been specially sum-

[1] Wilkins, iii. 494-6.

moned for the occasion. Being again asked to abjure, he offered to purge himself of the *fama* imputed to him—in other words he would not admit that he was held in bad repute; but he would give no plain answer whether he would abjure or not. The Archbishop addressed him personally, and implored him with tears to do as he was required, otherwise process must begin against him at once. The Primate then withdrew to celebrate the requiem of the last Bishop of Salisbury at the high altar of the cathedral. On his return Mungyn still refused to abjure. Then by the advice of all his brethren the Archbishop objected to him the following articles:—

1. That he had said that it was not lawful to make war on the notorious heretics who had rebelled in Bohemia. This he denied having ever said.

2. That he had said it was not lawful for any one to have private property, but all things should be common. This also he denied having said.

The Archbishop then ordered David Price to examine witnesses on these two articles and produce their examinations for judgments. After which Mungyn withdrew.

Richard Monk, priest, was then produced, who was also arrested for heresy. The articles objected to him were:— Richard Monk.

1. That he had been for many years, and was, in the city of London and in the diocese of Lincoln and elsewhere, defamed of heretical pravity and Lollardy. This he confessed.

2. That he, being Vicar of Chesham, was convented before Richard, Bishop of Lincoln, for heretical pravity and Lollardy. This, too, he confessed, and, being asked to abjure, he agreed to do so.

On Friday (the 3rd) the Archbishop, being occupied in the King's Council, commissioned the Bishop of Lincoln to preside for him, when Mungyn was again brought before the assembled prelates and a consider-

able body of divines of the four Orders. Dr. Lyndwood, the official of the Court of Canterbury, then objected the following articles against him :—

1. That he had known Peter Clarke, M.A., while he dwelt in England. This person, also known as Peter Payne, was at one time Vice-Principal of St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, and had fled abroad and joined the Bohemians.[1] This he confessed.

2. That this Peter Clarke was of ill-fame, notoriously defamed of Wycliffite heresy and errors, at Oxford, in London, and elsewhere. This also Mungyn confessed.

3. That, knowing him to be such, he adhered to him and had much communication with him. Confessed likewise, except that he had no communication with him in London, and received no *doctrine* from him but only *sophistria*. (That is to say, Mungyn wished it to be understood that his mind was quite unaffected by Payne's teaching.)

4. That he kept and gave to various persons English books containing errors of Wycliffe and of Peter Clarke. Replied that he had had the *Trialogus* and *Evangelia* of Wycliffe for twelve years, and had sold them to John Botte, a chaplain of Hampshire; but otherwise he did not believe the contents of the said article to be true.

5. That the said books contained heretical opinions and doctrines condemned by the Church. This he confessed.

6. That he communicated the said doctrine, opinions, and books with divers men and women in the University of Oxford, the city of London, and elsewhere, and taught them to them. This he denied entirely.

7. That in consequence of these and other things

[1] According to Dr. Gascoigne (*Lib. Verit.* 20) this Peter Clarke (or Clerk) stole the common seal of Oxford University and wrote with it to the heretics of Prague that Oxford and all England were with them except the false Friars Mendicant. See p. 56 note, *ante*.

he had been twenty years suspected as of the sect and rite of the Lollards and so reputed. Replied that he did not know that he was in any of these cases defamed, but thought himself a man of good fame.

8. That he was several times called to answer concerning faith before divers judges, viz. once before the late Bishop Clifford of London. Confessed that he was cited before Bishop Clifford for a sermon preached in London, and suspended for a time from cure of souls in that diocese.—Again, he was arrested by the Chancellor of England for suspicion of Lollardy and delivered to Archbishop Chichele; and, finally, "detected" (*i.e.* informed against) and delivered to William (Grey), present Bishop of London, for various heresies and errors. This he confessed.

9. That he knowingly visited Bartholomew Cornmonger, notoriously defamed and suspected as of the Lollard sect, and did not "detect" him to his ordinary. Answered: He did communicate with him, knowing him to be suspected, but he denounced him three times to the present Bishop of London.

10. That he had frequent access to Richard Monk, chaplain, a man likewise defamed of Lollardy, and knowingly communicated with him and did not "detect" him. Answered: He did not know him to be suspected.

11. Also with one Hoper, once a servant of Oldcastle, a man likewise much suspected and defamed of the premises, and, knowing him to be so, did not "detect" him. Confessed that he had been very familiar with him, but did not communicate with him on any Lollardy.

12. Also he had been very familiar with Thomas Garenter, chaplain to one Shadworth, citizen of London, a man not only much suspected of the premises, but also convicted on his own confession, and, knowing him as such, did not detect him. Answered: He did not know him to be suspected.

13. That in Shadworth's house he had said openly that it was not lawful for any Christian to fight against the heretics of Bohemia, and that all things should be common, and none should have private property. This he denied entirely.

14. That he is accordingly most vehemently suspected. Said that he did not believe the contents of this article to be true.

15. That by reason of the premises he is bound, at least, publicly to abjure the sect. Answered that he did not believe the contents of the same to be true.

16. That on being asked, he refused to abjure, incurring thereby a violent suspicion of heresy and error. Confessed that he refused.

The official then explained to the said Ralph various cases, from which and for which any one might be lawfully regarded as vehemently suspected of heresy, and the President showed him the danger of the law to a suspected person refusing to abjure. The President then asked him if he would or would not abjure all errors and heresies *præcise et penitus*. He still refused.

After long parleying, the President adjourned the Convocation till the coming of the Archbishop that same Friday afternoon. At this afternoon sitting the above-named Thomas Garenter was first brought in, and, articles being objected against him, he made his submission. Then Mungyn was brought in once more, and after the previous process against him had been recited he denied that he was suspected, and therefore declined to abjure. Again a long conference, and his case was adjourned till next day (Saturday, December 4).

Thomas Garenter.

On that day his case was preceded by that of Richard Monk, who, being brought up again, submitted, like Garenter, and for his penance agreed to abjure publicly next day at Paul's Cross. Then Mungyn

was brought in once more. He answered point blank that he was not suspected of any error or heresy, and would never abjure while he lived. In the first part of this answer, at least, he surely went rather far. The Archbishop then asked if Price had examined witnesses about him as directed. Price said he had, and produced the evidences he had obtained.

A formal inquisition had been made at the parish church of St. Michael Bassishaw as to Mungyn's life and conversation on the 27th July preceding, when the Vicar of St. Laurence Jewry could say nothing against him from his own knowledge, except that he was *graviter et enormiter* defamed of errors and heresies in London, and that formerly at Oxford there was a *vehemens infamia* against him. This was confirmed by a canon of Elsingspittle who served the parish church of Aldermanbury, and who was further told by W. Essfield, an alderman, that he had one day at dinner upheld two erroneous opinions: First, that it was not lawful for a Christian to fight against the heretics of Bohemia; and, second, that all goods ought to be common, and no one should have private property. The chaplain of St. Alban's, Wood Street, agreed with the Vicar of St. Laurence Jewry. And so on, nine witnesses in all being summoned, who partly confirmed each other's testimony; on which he was "detected" to the bishop next day at the chapter-house of St. Paul's. But he denied that he ever said the two things imputed to him; and he very persistently refused to abjure, though urgently entreated to do so by the bishop then, who thereupon said that he did not wish to proceed too hastily, but to inquire further.

David Price, accordingly, on the 4th December procured further evidence of what Mungyn had said at a dinner-table, when he maintained that a Christian ought rather to let himself be killed than kill one of the Bohemians, as killing was against God's command-

ment; and also that a man in necessity might receive goods of others without sin, and thus all goods should be common. One of the company present had asked him if indulgences granted by the Pope for redemption of captives in the power of pagans were valid or profited the souls of contributors; and he said No, the Pope had no more power to grant such indulgences than he had.

These testimonies were then read out, and the Archbishop asked Mungyn if he would now abjure, but he replied as before: he would never abjure as a man suspected of error or heresy so long as he lived. Hereupon he was pronounced a heretic, and committed to the prisons of the Bishop of London to undergo perpetual penance, reserving only to the Archbishop and his brethren, in some future provincial council, power to mitigate the sentence if they thought fit.

Next day, Sunday (December 5), Garenter and Monk abjured at Paul's Cross. Garenter confessed that he had called the Pope Antichrist; that he had said the bread remained in the sacrament; and that pilgrimage was not lawful, "and it was better to abide at home and beat the stools with their heels; for it was but tree and stone that they soughten"; that he held no Scripture catholic or holy but that contained in the Bible, and considered the legends of saints nought, and the miracles untrue.[1]

Cardinal Beaufort's legation.

Cardinal Beaufort had returned to England before this last session of Convocation. He was received in London with great solemnity by the Mayor and citizens on the 1st September. But a new constitutional question arose out of the fact that the Pope had appointed him legate to raise money in England for the war against the Hussites. As long as he had been legate only in continental countries England was not concerned; but the Protector, Duke

[1] Wilkins, 496-503.

Humphrey, caused a notary to make a formal protest against his exercising legatine authority in England as an invasion of the privileges of the kingdom. The incident, however, was apparently little more than a necessary formality. The Pope's appointment was valid; but action upon it could not be taken without the King's sanction, which evidently was not withheld. On the 17th December the Convocation, whose acts we have just been following, granted a moiety of a tenth for the proposed crusade, and then was prorogued to October following.[1] And on the 1st January 1429 Archbishop Chichele wrote to the prior and archdeacon of his own cathedral church of Canterbury, to give effect to the papal brief by which Beaufort had been constituted legate in March 1427.[2] The Cardinal then set out for Scotland in February to engage the interest of James I. in the same cause.[3] On his return in April a question was raised in the King's Council whether he should be allowed to perform service at Windsor on St. George's day by right of his bishopric of Winchester with the state of a cardinal—a matter which was considered so doubtful that he was asked to forbear coming thither; for the case of a cardinal retaining the bishopric at Winchester was not a usual one, and the Council were afraid to do anything to the prejudice of regal rights during a minority.[4] In June, however, he obtained from the Council liberty to publish his crusade, and to raise, under specified conditions so as not to be injurious to the kingdom, 250 spears and 2000 bows for the purpose.[5]

He had asked for 500 spears and 5000 archers; but the population had been so diminished by pesti-

[1] Gregory's *Chron.*, 162; Amundesham, i. 26; Foxe, iii. 717; Wilkins, iii. 503.
[2] Wilkins, 511-14.
[3] Nicolas's *Acts of Privy Council*, iii. 318; Amundesham, i. 28.
[4] Nicolas's *Acts P. C.*, iii. 323.
[5] Nicolas's *Acts P. C.*, 330-38; Rymer, x. 419 *sq.*, 423-4.

lence and by war that the number granted was all that could be spared; and the Council particularly required that the King's soldiers in France should not be solicited to abandon their duties there in order to go with the Cardinal. In point of fact the Council did not know how very ill even the number that they allowed to Beaufort could be spared. For their agreement with him was made at Westminster on the 18th June, the very day of the disastrous battle of Patay, when the reinforcements that Talbot and Sir John Fastolf were bringing against Joan of Arc were defeated. The Maid had already relieved Orleans, and was preparing to take Charles VII. to Reims. When the news reached England the Council felt at once that the agreement must be cancelled. They and Cardinal Beaufort were at Rochester on the 1st July,—the Cardinal, of course, about to cross the Channel with his men. But a new indenture was executed that day, by which the Cardinal consented to lead the men only into France. The Regent Bedford could then, by the King's authority, forbid any one of them, on pain of forfeiture of life and limb, to leave that realm of France until the 21st day of December following. The Cardinal was thus to be absolved from responsibility for the employment of his forces against the French, and the Pope was to be assured that the Council were only driven by necessity, and that they would repay him the wages of the men, and grant him another force against the Bohemians in May following.[1]

The Crusade to Bohemia abandoned.

It was about this time, in the seventh year of Henry VI., that, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Constance, Wycliffe's bones were disinterred and burnt at Lutterworth.[2]

Of the prosecutions for heresy at this time elsewhere than in London we have few detailed notices, though the fact that heresy was increasing all over

[1] Nicolas's *A. P. C.*, 339-44.

[2] Gregory, 163.

the province of Canterbury was lamented by Convocation. At Norwich there was one notable case—the priest William White who, as we have seen, in 1422, had abjured heretical opinions before Archbishop Chichele. He had since that ventured to take a wife, living two years in the guise of a layman within the diocese of Norwich, where he was not known. Nor was this, apparently, the worst thing of which he was guilty in matters of mere conduct; for it was found that he had introduced into the sect a young man of property, whose inheritance he dissipated within a twelvemonth.[1] In fact, he seems to have been a dangerous character, and on the 13th September 1428 he was brought up from prison in chains before the Bishop of Norwich, the Prior of Norwich Cathedral, Friars Thomas of Walden and John Lowe (the provincials of the Carmelite and Augustinian Orders respectively), four other Carmelites and four other Augustinians, two Franciscans, two Dominicans, and other divines and canonists—a very strong court to try his cause. The articles objected to him were thirty in number, and were mostly of an ordinary Wycliffite type about the eucharist, endowment of the clergy, mendicancy, and so forth. He confessed to having held most of them before his abjuration and some even after, but he strongly denied some others. He admitted that since his abjuration he had claimed for the clergy the right of marriage, calling the Pope Antichrist, and his councillors clerks of Lucifer; he admitted also his own relations with the woman whom he called his wife.[2]

William White priest.

[1] Netter of Walden writes about him as follows: "Vix item sunt sex menses ex quo sectatorum ejus [*i.e.* Wycliffe's] doctor quidam et presbyter uxoratus Guillelmus, dictus cognomine Albus, coram Guillelmo præsule Norvicensi est examinatus in hæresi et compertus dissipasse totam hæreditatem cujusdam juvenis quem induxit, circiter quadraginta librarum Anglici numismatis intra annum" (Th. Waldensis, *de Sacramentalibus*, in Blanciotti's ed., iii. 630).

[2] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 417-32. Several of his opinions are noted and refuted by Walden. See Blanciotti's ed., index under Guillelmus Albus.

Burnt at Norwich.

There could be but one end to such a man, a relapsed heretic, guilty of serious offences after abjuration. He was burnt at Norwich. Foxe also gives the names of a large number of other heretics in that diocese examined during this period. Some of these were accused of holding views of baptism which were not found, apparently, among the heretics of other dioceses, and which Foxe himself, who inspected the registers, is unwilling to believe that they really entertained. He takes it for granted, in fact, as he frequently does when the evidence contained in such documents is not agreeable to him, that the accused were wilfully slandered. We, who have the experience of later centuries to go by, will not quite so readily believe that "the notaries *slanderously depraved* their assertion, to make it more odious to the ears of the people, as though they should hold that the sacrament of baptism, used in the Church by water, is but a light matter and of small effect." Foxe himself seems to feel quite assured that they only spoke lightly of "the ceremonial and superfluous traditions then used in baptism, as salt, oil, spittle, taper, light, chrisms, exorcising of the water, with such other like." But the documents he consulted required a somewhat stronger effort of disbelief on his part than even this suggestion, and to do full justice to his incredulity we must quote the next few paragraphs :—

> Again, in speaking against the christening which the midwives use in private houses, against the opinion of such as think such children to be damned who depart before they come to their baptism, they are falsely reported as though they should say: That Christian people be sufficiently baptized if their parents be baptized before them. Which thing is so contrary to the manifest Word, that *it is not to be thought* that any are so ignorant of the Gospel that they ever would, or did, affirm the same.
>
> Moreover they thought or said *peradventure*, That in certain cases tithes might be withholden from wicked priests

sometimes, and be conferred to better uses, to the behoof of the poor. *Therefore they are falsely slandered* as saying and affirming, that no tithes are to be given to the ministers and curates of the churches.

And likewise for matrimony, wherein they are reported to hold and affirm as though it consisted only in the mutual consent betwixt the man and the woman, needing no other solemnising in the public church; and all because (*as it is likely*) they denied it to be a sacrament.[1]

Foxe's great work has been so generally regarded hitherto as a standard authority touching heresies and persecutions for heresy, that it is really necessary to call attention to the way in which he interprets evidences which are not laid before the reader textually. He had just been giving lists of "good men and women that were taken and examined upon suspicion of heresy," and of others who were forced to abjure and put to penance,[2] with comments vindicating from the charge of novelty "the true doctrine of the Word of God," and insinuating that these so-called heretics agreed in one faith as members of the true Church (not the Pope's), which existed long before the Reformation. But to make this out he actually rejected the plain meaning of the very documents he used!

A.D. 1430-1431. Richard Hunden.

In London an heretical woolpacker named Richard Hounden, or Hunden, is mentioned by the chroniclers as having been burned on Tower Hill on the 20th January 1430.[3] A year later, in March 1431, Thomas Bagley, Vicar of Manewden in Essex, was burned in Smithfield in the presence of the Protector, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester. He had been brought before Convocation early in March as an avowed disciple of Wycliffe, for whose tenets he declared himself quite ready to suffer, saying that he believed that Wycliffe resided higher in heaven than St. Thomas of Canter-

Thomas Bagley.

[1] *Acts and Monuments*, iii. 589, 590.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 587, 588.
[3] Fabyan, 602; Gregory, 171.

bury. The assembled divines did their best to remove him from his "perverse opinions," which they showed him were in some things opposed to those of Wycliffe himself. But their efforts were in vain. He was delivered to the Bishop of London to be proceeded against, and very soon met with his judgment.[1]

Bagley's case was evidently a very special one, when the Protector thought it necessary to be present at his burning. But soon after Easter Duke Humphrey's attention was called to something much more serious—"an assembly of heretics at Abingdon." So they are described by Fabyan, and from him and other contemporaries we learn that they had formed "a meynè of risers," declaring that they "would have three priests' heads for a penny." Their leader was a weaver, the bailiff of the town, whose proper name was William Maundevyle. But he was also known as William Perkyns, and as captain he thought best to call himself Jack Sharpe of Wigmoresland. He had been dispersing bills in London, Coventry, Oxford, and other towns, suggesting a large confiscation of Church property on the lines of the Lollard petition of 1410. News of the movement reached the Protector at Greenwich, and he immediately set out for Abingdon with a company. On Whitsunday Eve, the 19th May, the captain, with his confederates, seven in number, including those who had written his bills for him, was taken at Oxford. On Tuesday in Whitsun week he was drawn, hanged, and beheaded at Abingdon, and his head was sent up to London and impaled on London

Jack Sharpe of Wigmoresland.

[1] Amundesham, i. 61. Gregory, 171, says that he was burned on the 2nd March, which is certainly a mistake. Fabyan, 602, says "about mid-Lent," which was in that year the 11th March. The exact day was St. Gregory's day, March 12. See note in Kingsford's *Chronicles*, 308. The "Mabendon" of the H. MS. should have been Manewdon, which is in the same part of Essex as Thaxted. Bagley's examination before Convocation is given in Wilkins, iii. 515, 516, and dated "1429" by the editor, who, of course, means 1429-30, being before Ladyday. But the dates cited in the record, Friday, March 2, and Wednesday, March 7, prove conclusively that it was in the historical year 1431, in which he also suffered.

Bridge. His followers also were put to death at Abingdon.[1]

The just severity with which this outbreak was repressed seems to have had a wholesome effect. Down to the year 1428 it had been always said that Lollardy was increasing in England, and in the end of that year, as we have seen, many cases came before Convocation. In 1429 we hear of none at all—at least in the ordinary sources of information;[2] in 1430 only of the woolpacker Hunden; but in the first half of 1431 we have the martyrdom of Bagley and the rising of Jack Sharpe. Again, however, in the latter half of that year the records are silent about any cases of heresy; and even during the nine years following we hear of no further ones. This sudden arrest of an evil which till the end of 1428 seemed to be continually on the increase is not a little remarkable, and I may perhaps quote here what a German historian has said upon the subject:— Decline of heresy.

With the year 1431 [says Lechler][3] a pause began in England as regards the Lollards. We hear nothing more of executions, which were regarded as "acts of faith,"—not even once of processes before the spiritual jurisdiction against Wycliffites. The English hierarchy appears to be occupied only with the affairs of the collective Church, especially with the Council of Basel and the Hussites. On the 20th August 1432 Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, issued an order, in accordance with a demand of the Council of Basel, for prayers and masses to be celebrated for the conversion of the Bohemians. And in the year 1433 the Convocation of the province of Canterbury passed several resolutions with regard to the Council of Basel, especially in matters of the Hussites. The utterances were decided against any conces-

[1] Amundesham, i. 63, 64, 453, 456; Fabyan, 602; Kingsford's *Chronicles*; Gregory, 172.

[2] A Bristol Lollard, named William Curayn, was brought before John Stafford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, in 1429 and abjured. He had been cited elsewhere four times before. See Hunt's *The Somerset Diocese*, 143 (in "Diocesan Histories" Series, S.P.C.K.)

[3] *Johann von Wiclif und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation*, ii. 348 (Leipzig, 1873).

sion to them being made by the Church, so long as they should persist in holding Church authority of little value; for that was the very principle of all erroneous teaching and heresies.[1] When one reads these proceedings of the English provincial Synod, one cannot but be astonished how entirely the affair of the Hussites was treated as a foreign question, without any suspicion that England herself was closely interested therein.

The fact is, evidently, that Lollardy, though by no means extinct, had ceased to be obtrusive; and Lollardy, which was not, or did not threaten to be obtrusive, was not heretical. The English people did not sympathise with the Bohemians, whose example rather stood as a warning of what might be expected if obtrusive heresy, and even secret instigations to despise spiritual authority, were not severely put down. The regulations of Archbishops Arundel and Chichele to check irregular preaching and make periodical inquiries about heresy no doubt met with general approval. Their enforcement had only been weakened for a time by causes which were in themselves transitory. The support which Lollard clergymen had once received from knights and powerful lords had undoubtedly been repented of long ago by many others besides Sir Lewis Clifford, and Oldcastle had died unlamented. But after Henry V. came the evils of a minority, making government at home unsteady, while at the centre of Christendom it might still have been thought doubtful whether there was any fixed determining power which could command effectual obedience. Since the Council of Constance, indeed, a plural Papacy had ceased to exist; for though Benedict XIII. would not give up his pretensions, they were little regarded. Neither did his creation of four new cardinals, just before his death in 1424, tend very much to prolong the schism. From their number, indeed, was elected one more anti-

The supreme power in the Church not yet settled.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 519, 521 *sq.*

Pope, who was supported feebly for five years by Alfonso V. of Aragon. But in 1429 even he submitted to Martin V., and the unity of the Papacy seemed now secure. One thing only was wanted to complete matters—the fulfilment of that provision made at Constance for the frequent assembling of further councils; and in the beginning of 1431 men were looking forward to that Council of Basel referred to in the above extract to strengthen the papal monarchy on a constitutional foundation.

Another General Council had indeed been summoned by Martin V. to meet at Pavia in 1423, in accordance with the provisions of Constance, but it commanded little attention. It had scarcely met when, owing to an outbreak of plague, it was removed to Siena, where it did nothing of consequence, and it was dissolved next year. In 1430, when a new General Council was due in March following, Pope Martin was by no means anxious to see it meet. In November, however, on a day when three new cardinals were to be created, a document was affixed to the door of the papal palace, notifying that since the Council of Constance numbers had been perverted from the faith by the Hussites; that two Christian princes were prepared to defend some stated conclusions before the Council which should meet in March following; that the Hussite heresy, like all previous heresies, could only be extirpated by a Council; and that, if the Pope did not summon one at the appointed time, it still ought to meet, and those present at it should withdraw from his obedience. The author of this document was unknown, and the two Christian princes remained unknown also. But Martin was alarmed, and appointed Cesarini, whom he made cardinal for the purpose, legate for Germany, with a commission also to open the Council in the Pope's absence, and, if he found it desirable, to change the place of its meeting. The bull giving

him these powers only reached Cesarini at Nuremberg after Martin's death.

But how were the Bohemians to be won to a Council when they were excommunicated, and crusade after crusade had been sent against them as enemies to Christianity? Even Cesarini thought of nothing but of uniting Europe against them, though he still appealed to them to avert hostilities by coming back to Mother Church. But in August 1431, being with the German army invading Bohemia, he witnessed a painful discomfiture of the crusading host, and was himself compelled to fly before the heretics. He arrived at Basel in September, where his deputies had already opened the Council in July, with the conviction that a more conciliatory treatment of the Bohemians was necessary, and he wrote to the new Pope Eugenius IV. to that effect. The reunion of Christendom was desired, which a Council alone could effect, and not only the Bohemians, but the Greek Church were invited to send representatives to Basel, for it was hoped that the long-standing schism between East and West would at length be terminated.

Crusade in Bohemia defeated.

But Pope Eugenius could not see that it was at all a proper step to treat with excommunicated heretics, especially without his approval. He wrote to Cesarini in November to dissolve the Council, and summon another to be held at Bologna a year and a half later. Then began a long struggle between Pope and Council as to which was the superior authority. The Acts of the Council of Constance had already gone far to show that the Pope could not dissolve a Council without its own consent. The Emperor Sigismund was specially interested in the peace of Germany, for which the conciliation of the Bohemians was absolutely indispensable, and he gave his hearty support to the Council against the Pope. The French clergy also sympathised with the Council,

Struggle between Eugenius IV. and the Council of Basel.

and the Bohemians were won over to come to it. A great embassy from Bohemia entered Basel on the 4th January 1433, with a company of horse which had protected them through Germany, headed by the great Procopius himself. Their divines were Rokycana of Prague, representing the Calixtines, Nicholas of Pilgram, Bishop of the Taborites, and the Englishman Peter Payne, who had fled from Oxford to Bohemia when the tide had turned against the teaching of Wycliffe in England.

Bohemians at the Council.

They came to defend what were called "the four articles of Prague." Rokycana addressed the Council for three whole days on the subject of communion in both kinds. For two days more Bishop Nicholas upheld the thesis that sin ought to be punished even by secular authority, and inveighed at times on the vices of the clergy with so much indiscretion that he was blamed by Rokycana himself. Then another speaker, Ulrich of Zynaim, spent two days more in defence of the third article on freedom of preaching. Finally, Peter Payne held forth for three days on the temporal possessions of the clergy. Then speakers were set up to answer them at equal length, and though there were some exhibitions of feeling during the conference, on the whole there was mutual forbearance, and the Bohemians left for their own land in April, having really, it would seem, succeeded in mitigating prejudices on both sides, however little they could congratulate themselves on any tangible results. But ten ambassadors of the Council were deputed to go to Prague, and on their report it was afterwards agreed to concede to the Bohemians liberty to receive the communion in both kinds. A basis of peace was laid, and the chief difficulty was really due to the divisions and civil war which prevailed among the Bohemians themselves till the irreconcilable factions were completely crushed, and Procopius was killed at the battle of Lipan in May 1434.

Concessions made to them.

Now, at the beginning of that same year, 1434, Sigismund had achieved a very great triumph; he had reconciled Pope Eugenius and the Council. The Pope issued a bull acknowledging the Council's authority, and giving validity to all that it had done; and the Council on the 3rd February declared itself fully satisfied. The principle of constitutional government in the Church seemed to be completely acknowledged, and there was a fair prospect, besides, not only of stilling the troubles in Bohemia, but even of some steps being taken towards reuniting the Greek and Latin Churches. For the Greeks, being exposed to Turkish invasions, had good reason for desiring the sympathy of Western Christians, and even at the Council of Constance in 1417 the newly elected Pope, Martin V., had received an embassy from the Greek Emperor to negotiate for an object so devoutly to be wished. But this Council of Basel now showed a disposition to encroach too far on papal prerogatives, and slighted even the mediation of Sigismund. Then Eugenius had negotiations of his own with the Greeks, and the Greeks had communications with both powers to see how much could be made out of either. The old differences again broke out between the two in 1435, on the Council passing a decree for the abolition of annates as simoniacal, which would have deprived Eugenius of his principal revenues.

The Council's authority acknowledged by the Pope.

Next year it decreed a complete reformation of the Papacy and the cardinals, and the injured Pope appealed to Christian princes to withdraw their ambassadors from Basel. Europe was comparatively indifferent, but the Council had some difficulty in raising money to sustain the contest, while the Pope wished to shift the Council to Italy, as it would be hard for the Greeks to come to Basel through all the rugged country between them and the Rhine. The Council, however, in 1437 summoned

the Pope to Basel, and pronounced him contumacious for not appearing. But Eugenius had already replied to their summons by a bull for the dissolution of the Council, which the latter immediately declared null on the ground of its own superiority to the Pope.

Further contentions.

The death of Sigismund on the 9th December 1437 took away the only man who could have prevented a complete rupture. On the 30th Eugenius, by his own authority, transferred the Council to Ferrara. On the 24th January following the fathers at Basel declared the Pope suspended from his office. But they had not the courage to go further and depose him. To Ferrara came, in March 1438, the Emperor John Palaeologus II. with his brother, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and twenty-two bishops; and after some months' conference the Pope with their consent (which they were unable to refuse) transferred the Council to Florence, where, among other subjects, an interesting discussion was held on the celebrated *Filioque* clause in the Creed, declaring that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. This clause the Greeks admitted to be justifiable. A few days later the Patriarch Joseph died.

Terms of union with the Greeks.

Shortly afterwards terms of union between the Churches were actually agreed upon, and a decree signed on the 5th July. But the Greeks when they returned to their own country were received with anything but cordiality. They were considered to have betrayed the principles of their Church. Meanwhile the Western nations were seriously perplexed by the conflict between two great authorities, each claiming supremacy in matters ecclesiastical. A new schism was dreaded all over Europe, and interim arrangements became necessary for particular realms. France adopted a pragmatic sanction agreed on by a synod at Bourges. The German Electors after vain attempts at mediation held a diet at Mainz, which at

last decided in favour of the Council at Basel in March 1439.

With this encouragement the Council went on to discuss whether the Pope were not a heretic, and even a relapsed heretic, and they found that he was both, for the contempt that he had shown to their authority. It was declared to be a verity of the Catholic faith that a General Council had authority over the Pope and every other Christian man; also that the Pope could not by his own authority dissolve, remove, or prorogue such a Council; further, that whoever opposed these truths was to be considered a heretic; and that Pope Eugenius had first opposed them, then, on being admonished, had recanted his errors, and yet afterwards had fallen into the same errors again by renewed attempts to dissolve or remove the Council. These propositions, however, were not carried without long and stormy discussions; and but for the extraordinary pertinacity of Louis d'Allemand, Cardinal of Arles, it does not seem that they would have been carried at all, at least those bearing personally on Eugenius himself. Indeed, when the decree condemning his heresies was passed in May most of the prelates feared to put in an appearance, but the Cardinal having a large body of the inferior clergy on his side, had their places supplied by the relics of saints carried in procession from the churches. With this strange solemnity the decree was read and passed amid intense emotion; and notwithstanding the intervention of ambassadors arriving rather late from Mainz, it was followed by a decree of the Pope's deposition on the 25th June.

The Council condemn the Pope,

This step involved something further, and again the Cardinal of Arles had occasion to show his indomitable perseverance. For after they had agreed to defer a new election for sixty days, an outbreak of plague which had already begun became intense, and filled the streets with funerals. Among others the

celebrated Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini was smitten by the scourge, but he survived not only to write a very vivid account of the Council, but to become ultimately Pope Pius II. Other important members were carried off, but the Cardinal stuck to his post and kept the Council from breaking up. He was, however, the only cardinal present, and even when the business of making a new Pope was resumed in October a special mode of nominating electors had to be adopted, under which, on the 5th November, was chosen Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, who was not only a secular prince, but a married man with a family, though he had for some years retired into monastic seclusion. Twelve days later the election was confirmed by the synod, and Amadeus being informed of it, renounced his dukedom, and took the name of Felix V. Next year, 1440, on the 24th July, he was crowned at Basel by the Cardinal of Arles.

and elect another,

Thus a new schism was created, but the business had been clearly overdone. The election, though great formalities had been observed, had certainly been effected under strange conditions, and the coronation of Felix did but little to strengthen him. Frederic III. had just been elected Emperor, and whether he would recognise him was doubtful. Some of the electors, indeed, were drawn to Felix, but France would have nothing to do with him, and many princes would not commit themselves. Money difficulties became serious, and Pope Eugenius was growing stronger every day. Eugenius transferred his Council from Florence to Rome, which gave it much greater weight, and though Frederic III. was induced to come to Basel, he was careful not to address Felix as Pope. At last Felix himself in 1443 quitted Basel for Lausanne in ill-health, and though the Council lingered for six years longer it at last lost even German support, and terminated its own existence in 1449 when Felix V. abdicated, and it accepted as

who, however, gets little support and ultimately abdicates.

Pope Nicholas V., who had been elected two years before at Rome.[1]

Thus the idea of conciliar government for the Church—corresponding to what we call nowadays constitutional government in states—was found to be hopeless as a steady and continuous working principle, and the provisions made at Constance for frequent General Councils fell into disrepute. The tendency of the times in mere political matters was really towards autocracy as the only strong government for kingdoms; and the Papacy, too, from the very same causes was becoming a spiritual autocracy. Each of the different realms of Christendom had its own problems, and could not afford to be distracted with continual controversies between an official head of the Church and a body set up to control him. The expense too of maintaining a Council apart from Rome was unendurable, and vulgar considerations of money, whatever we may think of them, determine ultimately between what is practicable and what is not. The Council of Basel had prolonged its memorable, but not altogether happy, existence over a period of nineteen years. No other Council in the whole annals of the Church had ever approached that degree of longevity, and yet it was only kept alive by strange devices and by the hopeless stirrings of a small and diminishing minority. Maintaining its authority to the last, it nevertheless found it necessary to decree its own dissolution, and the Church was freed once more from every trace of schism.

Along with all this, however, the spiritual rule of nations was becoming more self-centred. The Prag-

[1] For the facts relating to the Council of Basel, as well as the story of the Council of Constance, it was not necessary to go much to original sources; and as to both these Councils, though I have referred to Æneas Sylvius, and verified some points from Hefele, I have generally followed the guidance of Wylie's *Council of Constance*, and Creighton's *History of the Papacy*. For the Bohemian history, too, I have mainly followed Creighton's book and Lechler (*Wiclif und die Vorgeschichte der Reformation*), not being concerned with any but undisputed facts.

matic Sanction in France and the Diets in Germany were suggesting something like spiritual independence, alike of Pope and Council; and the Pope, in his new autocracy, could only hope to maintain himself by acting continually in the character he had always professed, as "servant of the servants of God." England, too, like other nations, had spiritual problems of her own apart from the rest of Christendom, and how her bishops were dealing with them we have already partly seen.

The lull in heretical prosecutions in England seems to have lasted for nine years, when on the 17th June 1440 a priest named Richard Wiche, who had been Vicar of Deptford, was burnt on Tower Hill, having, of course, been degraded beforehand; and along with him was burnt a layman who was his seryant.[1] This priest's case created quite an unusual excitement; for he had been long known to the world, and had many sympathisers who considered him to be a saint put to death for malice, and even believed that he had proved his sanctity by miracles. Men and women went by night to the place where he had suffered, made their prayers there kneeling, as they would have done to a saint, offering money and images of wax, kissed the ground, and carried away his ashes as relics. When this had gone on for eight days the Mayor and aldermen set men-at-arms from all the wards of London to stop it; and they kept the hill both day and night till the beginning of August. Numbers of the devotees were arrested and sent to prison; and with them the Vicar of All Hallows Barking, in whose parish the burning had taken place. For he had turned the occasion to his own profit by strewing in the place other ashes mixed with spice powders, in order to receive more ample offerings from the misguided people, who mistook the

Richard Wiche burnt.

[1] Fabyan, 613; Gregory, 183; Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, 147, 163, 312; Davies's *English Chronicle*, 56.

odour of spices for the sweet flavour of a martyr's remains.

These doings, of course, created a very unpleasant impression, and a King's writ was issued to the sheriffs of various counties on the 15th July, strictly forbidding such pilgrimages and offerings as not only seditious but idolatrous. For it was shown that Wiche had been duly punished as a relapsed heretic; that it was unlawful to worship any man as a saint before he was canonised at Rome; and that the alleged miracles were altogether fabulous.[1] Yet the fact that writs were issued for other counties besides London and Middlesex shows that pilgrims had come from a distance to do him reverence.

His story.

What was the history of this man whose case attracted so much sympathy? He was one of the first generation of Wycliffe's followers, and must have been not far from sixty at the very least when he was burned. He had been priest nearly forty years before of the diocese of Hereford, and had wandered into that of Durham, where he had been admitted freely to preach by the rectors of different parishes. This apparently was irregular, though it was in the northern province, and some years before the constitution of Archbishop Arundel expressly forbade preaching in the southern without episcopal licence. He was brought before the Bishop of Durham (Bishop Skirlaw) accused of preaching false doctrine, and he himself has written an account of what followed. He denied the conclusions that he was said to have propounded, or that he had ever preached them. The Bishop told him he was gravely suspected of being of the Lollard sect, who did not believe the truth of the eucharist, and required him to declare his sentiments on that subject. He did so in words which seemed very explicit, admitting that the Host after consecration was the true body of our Lord in

[1] Foxe, iii. 703.

the form of bread, no matter into how many parts it was divided. "But," said the Bishop, "is it bread after consecration?" He was uncomfortable, and the Archdeacon of Durham said, "See how he hesitates in the faith." "No," he replied, "I believe that the Host is the true body of our Lord in the form of bread." "That is wrong," said the Chancellor; and the Archdeacon subjoined, "In the appearance (*species*) of bread, not in the form." Wiche replied, "Then the whole people is outside the faith"; and he turned to the people and said, "Do you not believe the eucharist to be the body of Christ in the form of bread?" "No," they replied. "But I believe it," he said.

There was further talk, and when the Chancellor asked him if he believed it was material bread or not, he said Scripture did not call it material bread, and therefore he could not believe it to be so as an article of faith. He was remitted to prison and afterwards examined before one of the Bishop's council, an Augustinian friar of Newcastle, whose name appears to have been Richard Holme. Again he made his declaration of faith as before, and two knights sitting beside the presiding judge thought he had shown himself a true believer. But again being asked whether the Host was material bread, he said he thought it sufficient to keep to the language of Scripture. Then he was asked to take an oath, but declined, and justified himself by scholastic arguments; then, after some further inquiry about the necessity of confession, which he admitted, and how often and to whom he had been confessed, which he evaded, he was again sent back to prison. But afterwards he was visited there by the friar on behalf of the Bishop, who was anxious to bring him to accord, and very willing to promote him if he could do so. About three weeks later he was brought again before the Bishop, who asked him why he would not swear

the oath required of him. "We, too," he said, "love our own souls as well as thou." But Wiche protested that he was not bound to obey any one, except so far as was consonant with the law of God. "Who was to be the judge of that?" said the court. A Grey Friar was present who had been a master in theology forty years, and spoke much in favour of papal laws. Wiche endeavoured to answer his arguments by suggesting some very extraordinary matrimonial cases in which he maintained that a Catholic was not bound to obey the canon law; but his arguments only excited derision, as there were no such cases in the books. A conversation followed, in which the Bishop, having got him to acknowledge that the law forbidding priests to marry was a good law, endeavoured to show that it was against the text of St. Paul, who allowed every one to have his own wife. "True," said Wiche; "but St. Paul adds, 'on account of fornication.'" He considered that the Bishop was trying to exalt the canon law above the gospel, and he would not allow it.

Again he went back to prison, and the Bishop, still hoping to persuade him, sent thither to him a knight with his chancellor and a notary priest. The knight took a seat while the other two stood, and spoke to him in a friendly way, wishing to know his objection to the oath required. He said there were three causes why he could not take it. One was founded on the case he had put to the Bishop about a son espoused to his mother. The Archdeacon said there was no such case in the whole canon law. He replied that it might occur, and there were several cases of divorce of daily occurrence in which the faithful were not bound to obey the law, otherwise they would break the commandments of God. "How would you judge in such cases?" asked the Archdeacon. "God knows," said Wiche. "That cause is not pertinent to your oath," remarked the knight.

"Very well," he replied. "Another cause is, that in case any one is accused unjustly, and the judge knows it, yet if the accuser has got false witnesses against him the judge is still obliged by law to condemn the innocent, which a Christian judge should not do." He was answered, "Neither is that cause pertinent to your oath." "Well," he said, "another cause is, that whatever laws or constitutions any one is bound to obey, he is bound to fulfil those laws contained in four books (perhaps meaning the Gospels). In like manner you are not bound to obey any law or precept whatever, except so far as it is consonant to the will of God. A layman is not bound to obey the laws belonging to the office of Pope, bishops, or priests, because he is not bound to fulfil them." "Thou sayest well," said the knight; "I am not bound to sit and hear confessions."

The knight then added, "Richard, canst thou find it in thy conscience to obey the law of the Church Catholic as far as pertains to thee?" "Certainly," said Wiche, "because I know that the law of God is the law of the Church Catholic, and God forbid that I should not obey the law of our God as far as pertains to me." "Thou sayest well," said the other; "keep that in thy heart and let that be thy oath, and thou wilt swear that as limited in thy heart." "Well, sir," Wiche replied; "but you know well, if I should receive an oath from a judge, I ought to receive it according to the intent of the judge, and not according to my own." "Thou mayest know assuredly," said the Archdeacon, "that my lord would receive from thee this oath, because I am sent from my lord to treat with thee upon the same oath; and if thou wouldst do so, my lord will absolve thee from any other oath, and thus wilt thou make a good end. It is better for thee to do so than to be thus imprisoned." "I would willingly be liberated," said Wiche, "if it pleased God." "But of one thing," said the Arch-

deacon, "thou must beware, that whatever oath he show thee, thou ask no questions about it, because a subject should not ask such questions of his superior, for the pot does not ask of the potter, 'Why hast thou made me for this use, or for that?' And my lord is somewhat capricious (*capitosus scilicet testis*). And if thou wouldst agree to this, I will, if thou be willing, go to my lord and treat to this end." He said he would willingly, if the Bishop would receive his oath subject to the inward reservation that he was bound to obey the law of God so far as pertained to him. "Do not doubt," said the knight. But the chancellor said, "By God, thou shalt swear as we will before thou shalt depart." The knight rose, and said to him at the door, "Richard, wilt thou, in faith, keep promise of things which thou hast said?" "Yes," he replied, "if my lord will keep promise in the things which you have said." The knight said he might be sure of that, and withdrew.

He was brought before the Bishop next day about the hour of prime (6 a.m.). They gave him an oath to read first by himself, and he read it three times over. He found it "full of iniquity," and appealing to the knight, who was standing beside the fire, he said, "That is not the oath of the compact; I will never swear it." "No," he said, "wilt thou not swear the oath with the reservation in thy heart?" "Well," he said, "I will." The Bishop sat on a form and he knelt before him. He said, "My lord, I am willing to swear the oath of agreement limited to me in the heart by my master, the knight here, if you desire it." The Bishop said, "Swear, then; put your hand upon the book." He did so. They read the oath to him and he kissed the book. He hoped that was all; but they gave him another oath to read touching the eucharist, which he was afterwards sent to prison for refusing to swear. The Grey Friar told him he was bound to swear it by virtue of the oath already

taken, for he very much feared he had taken it with some subterfuge. The Bishop cited to him the case of Berengarius, whose recantation on that subject they caused them to read to him, and they showed him that it was not against the gospel which every one is bound to believe. Then followed a discussion in which he begged of the Bishop that if anything were demanded of him as an article of faith it should be shown him in the law of God. The Bishop told him that he and "James"[1] perverted the people in Northumberland. The Grey Friar put a question to him about the foundation of his belief regarding the Host, and after much debate the Bishop, on the chancellor's suggestion, asked him when and to whom he was last confessed; which he did not directly answer, but said he had been six times confessed within a short period.

Shut up in prison again for three days till the following Sunday, he was much afflicted in spirit about that "poisoned oath," not knowing what he should do if the Bishop did not keep to the agreement. But the day for which he was summoned passed by without a sitting, and he comforted himself, having heard from jurists that in such a case an accused person was not bound to appear again without a new process. Yet he was brought before the Bishop the Sunday after that, and they read to him Purvey's recantation, and asked him if he would do likewise. He remonstrated against what he thought an irregular proceeding. But he said he had nothing to do with that recantation, and was prepared to declare his faith touching the eucharist. It was sufficient for every faithful Christian to believe what Christ said, without adding to His words. "Certainly," said the Bishop, "either he is outside the faith or we are." He was again sent to prison, and the Bishop sent him a writing by his chancellor, with a clear statement of the doctrine of

[1] "Jacobus." Was this William James? See p. 126, *ante*.

transubstantiation, requiring him to reply precisely in writing what he thought of the conclusion and of each part of the argument. He said he could not declare it; but the chancellor left the writing with him, and paper and ink, and visited him next day to receive his declaration. But he said he was not a *declarator* and did not know how to declare; if they would lend him a Bible he would write his faith willingly. His private remark on the matter was that because they could not catch him *in sermone* they tried to do it *in declaratione.*

His first examination by the Bishop had been on the 7th December, and the proceedings already mentioned must have lasted into, or over the new year. He was still in prison just before Ash Wednesday, when he was visited by a white canon (that is, a Premonstratensian), who wished to persuade him by the advice of Solomon not to trust to his own wisdom, but to consider that it was the belief of the whole Church that the eucharist after consecration was not bread, but the body of our Lord. "Show me that negative," he replied, "in the law of the Lord, and I am ready to believe it." "Oh," said the canon, "here is the Bishop's butler, and thou wilt not believe it is the Bishop's butler unless thou seest the butler's keys in his hands!" And then followed another long colloquy, in which the canon sought to prepare him for a further appearance before the Bishop, before whom, indeed, he was actually brought again a fortnight later, though without any summons. The Bishop was seated in a chair near the fire, Wiche's old friend, the knight, on a form before the fire, and two masters, the one a Black Friar named Paris, the other the prior of the Augustinians at Newcastle, a monk called Rome, and the household of the Bishop at the back, Wiche himself being between them and the fire. The chancellor then stood before the Bishop and said to him, "Master, my lord demands of thee if yet thou

wilt write thy intention and answer to every particular of that writing?" Wiche said to the Bishop, "My lord, if you will move the common law to me you have no process against me." And he gave his reason as already stated. He was pressed, however, with the oath which he had already taken, and he said he never intended to take it without the reservation agreed to by the knight. But the knight denied having urged him to swear in that way. He protested that he said the truth and that he had been betrayed. But his protest was not accepted, and the Bishop warned him that he was in danger of a relapse.

At last, after repeated appearances and discussions, the Bishop's chancellor pronounced sentence of excommunication against him as a heretic, and that he should remain in prison till they had arranged a time for his degradation. On this he protested that the process was irregular, and besides the want of summons, he noted an error in the form of oath thrust upon him, in which he was called a priest of Worcester diocese, though he did not belong to that diocese. Finally he appealed to the Pope. "Thou hast come late," they said. Brother Paris told him the Bishop had done a greater act of charity in adjudging him a heretic than if he had fed a thousand poor men at his table. But Wiche would not take this patiently. "For what am I a heretic?" he said. "I said nothing but the law of our God. Certainly if it were possible that Christ should stand personally before you, you would judge him a heretic as you have done me." And he said to the people: "I ask you to bear witness that this is my faith which I have six times said before them: I believe that the venerable sacrament is the true body of Christ and the true blood in form of bread." He was then taken again to prison.[1]

All this is but a condensed abstract of his own account of a very long process, in which neither the

[1] *English Historical Review*, v. 531-41.

judicial proceedings nor the logical arguments used in the defence appeal much to the sympathies of modern times. We have almost lost the feeling that truth is the special charge in keeping of the Church, and still more that truth is to be evolved by Aristotelian philosophy and logic from the words of Scripture as understood by the Fathers and the great divines of past ages. Wycliffe himself had made the appeal to Scripture more direct, and had made the pious laity joint trustees with the clergy in its interpretation. But it was still felt that a priest must have the truth to preach and nothing but the truth, else he was a misleader of the people. Bishop Skirlaw evidently thought the case a very grave one, and was anxious to give the accused every possible chance; but as Wiche's theology did not exactly square with the standard, he was obliged to pass sentence upon him at last.

It must be observed, however, that a man's account of his own case, however sincere and honest, when he differs from his fellow-mortals, is probably not the whole truth; and least of all when he describes it for the information of a sympathising brother, probably in a foreign land. For such is the story we have just read. We do not know to whom it was addressed, but it begins with the words "Reverende domine et frater," and the manuscript is preserved to this day in the library of the University of Prague. At the head also is written, apparently by a Bohemian, who has altered the spelling of Wiche's name with a view to its proper pronunciation in the Czech language: "Gesta cum Richardo Wycz presbytero in Anglia." This, then, is Wiche's account of his examination before Bishop Skirlaw, written for the encouragement of friends afar off, and it contains not a word about what we know by documentary evidence to have been the real conclusion of the business. For it appears that after all these repeated examinations and im-

prisonments Wiche at length yielded to persuasion, or, perhaps more probably, to fear of consequences. His courage gave way, and he made a declaration recanting not only his sacramental heresy, but also a good many other things that he had maintained, of which there is no mention whatever in his own elaborate account of his examination. The preamble of his recantation, which is in Latin, is recorded as follows :—

I, Richard Wiche, priest of Hereford, say and affirm that lately the Reverend Father in Christ William [*should be* Walter], by the grace of God Bishop of Durham, warned me to reply to certain articles touching the Catholic faith, and that I should declare how I felt in them; and because I did not reply to his command and did not declare myself, he twice excommunicated me. And in this I confess that I erred and fell short of duty. Therefore I submit myself humbly to his correction, seeking absolution from the aforesaid censures passed against me, and reformation of my state. And I swear, etc.

He then confesses that he had been denounced to the Bishop for preaching fourteen several conclusions, viz. :—

1. That images should not be worshipped. 2. That God cannot by His ordinary power make an image bleed. 3. That a man ought not to confess to a vicious priest, but choose a confessor of good life, and such a one would give him as full absolution as if St. Peter himself came down from heaven and absolved him. 4. That every layman was bound to know the whole gospel, and after he knows it, to preach it. 5. A layman ought always to pray in his own native tongue, that he may understand what he prays. 6. Every priest ought to the best of his capacity to know the whole sacred Scripture according to the four senses of it; and he is bound in duty to preach it. 7. It is no use going to Jerusalem or to Rome, because whatever you will have there you will have here, as baptism for the deletion of original sin, and so forth. 8. Men and women going on pilgrimage ought always to make Holy Scripture the subject of their conversations.

One cannot but pause for a moment to ask what

would Chaucer's pilgrims have said to that last? In that pleasant company the parson was regarded as a Lollard because he objected to profane swearing, and his tale was deferred till after all the others. But to continue :—

9. No priest ought to beg anything. 10. Alms ought to be given only to the decrepit and the feeble, the sick and persons robbed. 11. The cross of Christ on which He died is not to be worshipped. 12. Every place is just as good as another for prayer. 13. They who burn men act unlawfully. 14. They are fools who say that Richard Wiche erred in anything.

These conclusions, he confessed, were false and erroneous, being contrary to the Catholic faith and sound doctrine, and he swore never to maintain them in public or in private, but always uphold the contrary as orthodox. And he further accepted six articles proposed to him by the Bishop as true and Catholic, promising always to hold and affirm them. These were as follows :—

1. The bread, made of flour and water, which is placed upon the altar to be consecrated by the ministry of the priest, after the words of consecration have been duly pronounced by him, does not remain the bread made of corn which was then placed before, but it is transubstantiated into the very body of Christ, born of the Virgin, which suffered on the cross; and there remain there the accidents of the material bread placed there, without any substance of the same.

2. The wine placed on the altar to be consecrated by the ministry of the priest, after the words of consecration have been duly pronounced by him, is not wine, but is transubstantiated into the very blood of Christ shed for our redemption on the cross, and there remain only the accidents of wine without any substance of the same.

3. That every Christian is bound to obey all the constitutions and ordinances contained in the Decrees, Decretals, Sext, and Clementines, as far as the Church of Rome obliges him to obey them.

4. That the four orders of mendicant friars approved

by the authority of the Church of Rome and by law, are allowable, and that any one may meritoriously enter any of them and profess and duly serve there.

5. That no priest, nor any other, ought publicly to preach the Word of God, except to his parishioners and subjects, if a cure of souls be committed to him by his superior, or he be otherwise specially licensed thereto by the ordinary of the place, or by another who lawfully may give special licence thereto.

6. Whosoever has entered any order of the approved religious mendicants, however strong he may be in body and able to labour, may justly and lawfully beg.

To this he subjoined a very solemn abjuration of all the heresies for which he was denounced to the Bishop, declaring that of his own free will and inclination he held and believed all that was taught by Holy Mother Church, of which Pope Innocent VII. was the head.[1]

Thus the date of the document is brought within very narrow limits; for Pope Innocent VII. was elected in October 1404, and died on the 6th November 1406. And as Bishop Skirlaw himself died as early as March in the latter year, we may pretty safely say that the long examination before him began before Christmas 1404, and ended in a sentence in Lent 1405. After which this recantation took place, perhaps before Easter. And it should be noted that in the six articles subjoined the third is precisely to the same effect as the "iniquitous" oath, which he said he had been induced to subscribe on a wrong understanding; while the fifth constitutes additional evidence that the strict limitation of the right of preaching to parish clergymen and those specially licensed by the ordinary, was the understood law of the Church recognised here in the northern province two or three years before it was enforced by Archbishop Arundel's constitutions in the southern.

[1] Shirley's *Fascic. Zizan.* 501-5.

Wiche, no doubt, saved himself from extreme punishment by his recantation; but he was not at once liberated from prison. He was brought up to Westminster, however, by a writ of *corpus cum causâ*, and was set free there by the Court of Chancery. Unluckily, after a time, he again fell under suspicion of heresy, and was apprehended and imprisoned once more. In 1419, as we have already seen,[1] he was one of four chaplains brought before Convocation, of whom one had to do penance for practising magical arts, and two others abjured. But he, the last, as an old offender, could only be remitted to the Fleet Prison from which he had been taken, until it could be determined what to do with him.

From this time he was probably kept in prison till 1440, though why his case did not come to final judgment before then we do not know. We have his answers to another set of fourteen articles, differing materially from the fourteen above noticed, but at what date these were objected to him there is nothing to show. It appears he had said that images, etc. should rather be burnt than worshipped; that he would rather eat earth than beg; that every good priest had quite as much power as the Pope; that those were not (necessarily) excommunicated whom the Pope excommunicated. He had objected to offerings at churching of women, at baptism, and at reception of the eucharist. He had said that a priest receiving a salary was excommunicated; that bastards could not be saved; that no offerings were lawful except animals; that a boy could bless bread as well as the priest; that no one should give tithes, or a mortuary; that no order of friars should exist; that nuns should not be; and that masses for the dead did not profit their souls, but rather increased their pains.[2]

[1] See p. 126, *ante*.

[2] *Fascic. Zizan.*, 370-82.

These may have been early extravagances. They look rather like those of the first age of Lollardy, where some went beyond Wycliffe himself. The strange article about bastards, for instance, looks very like one of the teachings of John Ball; and the mind that could suggest in argument the possibility of a son being bound to marry his mother under the canon law was surely capable of maintaining great absurdities. But it may be observed that these articles are each of them, except the fifth and sixth, followed by a defence or explanation of the position taken up, and that the explanation comes occasionally very near to explaining the article away. Thus the doctrine that "neither the son of a priest nor any other man born out of matrimony can be saved" is made to rest upon scriptural texts, "from which I inferred," says Wiche, "that boys born out of matrimony were in some way (*quodammodo*) more unfitted and out of order and more inclined to evil than sons born in matrimony. But I always believe, have believed, and confess and have confessed, that the son will not bear for ever the iniquity of his father or mother; because at whatever hour the sinner groan, God will not remember his sins. Moreover, our Lord Jesus says to the Pharisees and scribes, 'The publicans and the harlots shall enter the kingdom of heaven before you,' for Christ came to save sinners. And 'whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.'"

It would seem that sometimes these "Biblemen" of the new school were as hard put to it to build a religion upon texts, and then to make the result intelligible, as any scholar at the university to discuss his *quodlibet*.

CHAPTER III

WRITERS AGAINST LOLLARDY

Thomas Netter of Walden.

King Henry V., apparently near the end of his reign, took as his confessor a Carmelite friar, by name Thomas Netter, known better in literature as Thomas Waldensis, or Thomas of Walden, because he was a native of Saffron Walden in Essex. His great abilities must have been manifest to the world even before 1409, when he was sent to the Council of Pisa, at which he is said to have vindicated by strong arguments that Council's validity against some plausible objections. After his return to England he took a prominent part in the prosecution of Wycliffe's followers, among others in that of William Taylor, on his first impeachment before Archbishop Arundel, and then in that of Sir John Oldcastle. In 1414, at a council of the order held at Yarmouth, he was elected provincial of the English Carmelites in succession to his friend and patron, Stephen Patrington, who had just been promoted to the bishopric of St. David's. Next year he went as one of the English representatives to the Council of Constance; after which, in 1419, he was sent by Henry V. to Lithuania to negotiate between the King of Poland and the Teutonic knights. On this occasion he no doubt used his opportunities to promote the faith in pagan Lithuania; but it is not true, as tradition afterwards reported, that he converted Duke Vitovt, and got him crowned as king, for it seems that Vitovt was neither

crowned nor converted. Netter returned to England, and on the 21st April 1421 he presided over an assembly of his order at Norwich. Then, as King Henry's confessor, he went over with him on his last crossing to France, and attended him on his death-bed at Vincennes. After which, returning home once more, he preached his funeral sermon at Westminster in November 1422.

There is not much else to be said about his career except that he was confessor to the young King Henry VI. as he had been to his father, and that he went over with him also to France, and died at Rouen in November 1430. During the interval of more than seven years of Henry VI.'s reign, which he spent in England, it is hardly necessary to say that he was as fervent against Lollardy as ever, and for one thing, as we have seen already, he was a member of the court presided over by the Bishop of Norwich which tried William White for heresy in 1428.

It is stated by Bale, and perhaps not untruly, that he preached once at Paul's Cross,[1] admonishing Henry V. for his slackness in punishing heretics, and that Henry showed how well he accepted the reproof by making him a member of his Council, and afterwards his confessor. But the reproof, if so given, must have been very early in the reign,[2] whereas his appointment as the King's confessor seems to have been late. And in the interval he himself addressed Henry in terms of the highest praise for the great zeal that he had shown against heretics, seeing that he had made it a primary object to put them down just after his coronation.[3]

Before Henry's death he had begun to write against

[1] Compare as to this Bale's *Scriptores* with his book of Carmelite writers in Harl. MS. 3838, f. 35*b*.

[2] It might have been for showing undue favour to Oldcastle.

[3] For the facts of Netter's life the reader may be referred to the General Preface of Blanciotti's edition of the *Doctrinale*, and to Mr. Kingsford's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

His *Doctrinale.*

the Lollards that great work by which he is best known. It is entitled *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Fidei Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, and as a mere monument of literary industry, especially when taken along with the two supplements by which it was very shortly followed up, it is indeed amazing. Apart from these two supplements, each about as large as itself, the work consists of four books, the contents of each being very systematically divided into "articles" and chapters. The first book contains three of these "articles," or sections, through which forty-four chapters are consecutively numbered. The second has likewise three articles with eighty-three chapters running through them in the same way. The third has three articles in thirty-two chapters, and the fourth has three articles in forty-seven chapters. There is a general prologue, but each book has also a separate one besides, and prefixed to the whole is a letter of dedication to Martin V.

This dedicatory epistle begins with the observation that there is a great storm at sea, so that St. Peter's boat has a hard battle with the waves of heresies and errors. And to whom should the faithful fly except to the Vicar of Christ, crying out, "Lord, save us, we perish." The Church, his only bride, calls upon him for help. He has the power and resources at command. Yet how great soever be the weight of authority which he wields, it should not be left to stand alone, lest the enemy should say, "I prevailed against him. He cannot defend himself by the laws of Christ, but by the mere weight of his authority he oppresses us against the law." For this is the saying of our heretics. And Walden begs that though he be the least of his servants he may with the Holy Father's blessing strive to answer their boasting. For when, in youth, he lent ear to their logical disputations, he was astounded with the boldness of their assertions. His faith remained

intact, but he had to wrestle with their opinions, and when he turned to the study of the Scriptures he found that they had distorted their sense in a way to which all commentators were opposed.

In the general prologue to the work he finds it necessary to discuss ten doctrines before entering on points of detail. He is going to write, he tells us, against the new Wycliffites who of late days have filled the churches of England, and now have invaded the whole realm of Bohemia. First of all he expresses his abhorrence that Wycliffe, in all his arguments, should cut the Christian faith in two, and only accept the one-half; for Wycliffe, he says, pretends that he admits the faith of the Scriptures, but he neglects that faith of the whole Christian Church which Jesus Christ, and even St. Paul, delivered unwritten, and without which any one errs, no matter how much of the Scriptures he brings forward. But to meet objections from those who think so much of Wycliffe and undervalue a man like himself as a follower of the Fathers, he will rest his argument, not on human wisdom, but on the Word of God. "My doctrine, truly," he says, "will not be mine, but His who sent me."

Even a constant man, he considers, may well be appalled with the persecution of the Lollards, which he fully expects in the future.[1] Later writers, who could not realise the condition of the world in pre-Reformation times, have talked about "the persecution of the Lollards" in a very different sense from this. It was persecution by the Lollards that Thomas of Walden expected. Oldcastle, we may surmise, was still at large, meditating a new rebellion to put down all Church order and civil order also in the name of the gospel of Wycliffe. "But let them rage, and let them laugh," he adds; "a son of the Church of England I

Danger from the Lollards.

[1] "Terrere posset constantem virum persecutio Lollardorum quam de certo futuram expecto."

remain, and trusting in the consolation of my Mother, for whom I wish that it might be given me to die, I lend an ear to what St. Hilarius says on those words of Psalm cxviii., *Iniqui persecuti sunt me, adjuva me*: It is necessary, says Hilarius, that the wicked should persecute, because wickedness is the effect of an unjust doing. The apostle knows this iniquity of persecutions when he says, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,'"[1] and so forth. The followers of Wycliffe, arrayed for battle, provoke the Church to fight, and the writer has felt stimulated by their challenge. "I was suddenly called to action," he says, "in Oxford University, along with my brother William (a brother Carmelite named Beaufo[2]), who was chosen for this by a certain nobleman, by one of their most audacious champions named Peter Clerk to dispute touching pilgrimages, the eucharist, the religious life, and voluntary mendicancy. We came, we were there; but, as those know and still declare who were present, before we came to close quarters Peter Clerk, choked with silliness, took himself off. Yet daily Catholic men of the true Israel hear the sermons of such a Philistine, and are stupefied by their grandiloquent display." To counteract such influences he proceeds to controvert ten Wycliffite doctrines or contentions, which are as follows:—

Their doctrines and arts.

1. That whatever the Pope or the Church says is to be condemned if they do not prove it from Holy Scripture.

2. That Holy Scripture is the sole rule of faith, and whatever the Church at large or the Fathers have taught is to be despised, even what holy Councils have decreed.

3. The Wycliffites despise not only the teachings

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 12.

[2] This, I have no doubt, is the name given by Bale in his *Scriptores*, 517, as Bevvfv. Beaufo was not an uncommon name, and William Beaufo actually occurs, though apparently not an ecclesiastic, on Pat. 8 Ric. II. p. 1, m. 9.

of holy doctors, but declare that their expositions are to be rejected, after the example of Wycliffe, who said that all holy Fathers since the first millennium were in error.

4. The Wycliffites set themselves up as far more learned than bishops and other Catholics; that so, when they are openly vanquished, they may escape and make the orthodox seem vile in comparison with themselves.

5. They preach that Catholic doctors are incapable of understanding Wycliffe's doctrines.

6. They praise greatly Wycliffe's books that they may provoke the orthodox to read them.

7. They affect piety, declaim against vices, and inculcate the divine Scripture that they may the more skilfully deceive the simple-minded.

8. They adjust not only their words but their morals also to the end that they may seduce others by an opinion of their good life.

9. After the fashion of early heretics they prate against Catholics, insinuating that they do not understand the sayings of Wycliffe; but they recite them falsely, or they rashly attribute to him things which he did not say.

10. They excuse their master, Wycliffe, alleging that he retracted several things before his death, and altered some, and that Catholic writers are silent about certain points, and show up certain things in hatred of him.

This syllabus is to us on the whole more interesting than the contents of the work itself, for it shows us the main questions in dispute between orthodoxy and Lollardy. The first three headings especially indicate the fundamental basis of the whole Wycliffite philosophy; and we shall find from many other evidences besides that not only Wycliffe himself, but the whole of his followers, even to our own time (for he has real followers still), have rested their case

entirely on Scripture, regarding it as the sole rule of faith without reference to ecclesiastical tradition or the teaching of the Church apart from Holy Writ. It was this view that was the root of all the mischief, and Walden set himself to oppose it to the utmost of his power. At the end of this prologue he grieves that there is no authority, no order that heretics respect, no Pope whom they do not treat either as unprofitable (*inutilis*) or as a perfidious Antichrist, no cardinal or bishop whom they do not call "Imperial clerk," and so forth (the phrase "Emperor's clerks" was continually used by Wycliffe to signify those who accepted civil offices, honours, and endowments, to the detriment of their spiritual functions). "And if we go beyond men," he adds, "who is not distressed to hear our God described as 'anything that can be named'—this ass, that devil; and to be told that the Almighty Lord can do nothing more than He does, nor could He yesterday have killed the gnat that survives to-day, and many other blasphemies?" Wycliffe's theology, in short, is impeached as what we might call necessarian and pantheistic.

Points in Walden's argument.

It is against these and other sophistries of Wycliffe, scattered throughout his writings, that the first book of the *Doctrinale* itself is directed, especially in the first two articles, and there is little occasion here to sketch the outline of an argument against propositions which hardly any Christian would think of maintaining now. The title of Article I. is "On the Essence, Power, and Knowledge of God"; that of Article II., "De Compositione Hominis," indicates a discussion of Wycliffe's view that man is a trinity consisting of an immortal spirit, a corruptible body, and an intermediate soul (*animationis mediæ*); Article III. is "Of Christ, who is God and Man," and attacks Wycliffe's view of the two natures as unsound, suggesting, among other things, that if his view of the human trinity was right, it makes Christ a quaternity.

Book II. is of greater interest. It is "Of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and of its various members." Article I. is on St. Peter's bishopric, showing that he was the chief of the apostles and head of the Church. Wycliffe was a modern Herod who sought to behead St. Peter by exterminating the whole line of Popes, and so forth. Article II. sets forth the true nature of the Church in opposition to Wycliffe's view that it consists of the whole of the predestined. It is shown that the Church mentioned in the Creed has authority to put an end to all doubts, and that besides the Scriptures it is necessary to ponder the sayings of the Fathers. In the course of this book, in chapter 23, the author alludes to the case of a learned female disciple of Wycliffe who defended in the city of London the position that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of our Lord because it is not stated in Scripture. Many heresies, the author points out, might arise in this way. In chapter 26 the authority of a General Council is vindicated; for Wycliffe had said that even a council of the Apostles was not to be trusted except so far as it is believed that the Holy Spirit confirmed their judgment. And as for modern councils, many of those who resorted to them were apostates, fools, and ignorant, and it was blasphemous to lay down a law binding men to stand to the judgment of the majority.

Article III. of this book is the longest. It is entitled "Of the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ according to their Professions and Offices *seriatim*." Beginning with a detailed vindication of papal authority, and of the need that a Pope should exist on earth notwithstanding that Christ resides above in heaven,—a reason for which Wycliffe maintained that the Church could do without any Pope at all,—it goes on to discuss the functions of cardinals, patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops, the

need of bishops for confirmations and other functions, and the importance of their being canonically elected; then treats of archdeacons, officials, and deans; then of pastors of the second order, and of the right to tithes. Next the author discusses universities and degrees, which Wycliffe had virtually slighted, making no account of a Catholic scholastic doctorate obtained by long study and approved by qualified judges. Then he repels an attack on cathedral and university colleges, which Wycliffe had classed as "Caimitical." This term requires explanation to the modern reader. In many MSS. of the Vulgate the last letter of the first murderer's name was inaccurately given as *m*, not *n*, and the common practice of leaving money to the four orders of friars (Carmelites, Augustinians, Jacobites, and Minorites[1]), whose initials formed the name "Caim," was called by Wycliffe, and apparently by others before him, endowing "Cain's castles" (*castra Caimitica*). As these orders furnished the greater number of the divines who upheld Catholic doctrine, Wycliffe seems to have applied the name also to other orthodox bodies. "All these sects," Wycliffe had said, meaning the orders of friars, "and all novelties which are not founded in Christ the Lord, tempt Christ with [the help of] Satan, when they despise the free ordination of *His* sect (*i.e.* His followers), and prefer another servile sect which is not so good; as if they would not ascend the steps which God has ordained into the celestial Zion, but like better to fly through the air with Satan's aid, carried up to the pinnacles of the Temple. What alms, then, is it to nourish such a child of the devil in Cain's castles against Christ?" This argument is severely rebuked, and the author is not spared for his confusion of two letters of the alphabet.

[1] The Jacobites, so called from their church of St. James at Paris, were the Dominicans or Black Friars; the Minorites were the Franciscan or Grey Friars.

Then comes the question of Wycliffe's encouragement of unordained and unlearned preachers. "It is at the suggestion of the devil," Wycliffe says, "that bishops of the disciples of Antichrist deny the right of poor priests to preach the Gospel unless they have licence from them." On the contrary, he maintains that they have by special gift of God the knowledge and the mind to preach the gospel, and neither God nor man ought to stop them.[1] He does indeed, in one sermon, condescend to bishops who judge rightly. But he rages against "the Council of the Earthquake," in which he and his disciples were forbidden to preach; and one of his conclusions (No. 13), twice condemned, was that "those who forbear to preach or hear the Word of God on account of the excommunication of men are themselves excommunicated, and will be held traitors to Christ in the day of judgment." One of his disciples, indeed, an eminent doctor of great authority named Purvey, goes so far as to say that all priests are bound to preach, whoever says nay, and all deacons, clerks, kings, princes, fathers of families, and laymen are so likewise. This he states in a work written by him, *de Compendiis Scripturarum, paternarum doctrinarum et canonum*;[2] and in the second chapter he extends this duty even to women, whom the apostle expressly excludes. So far, indeed, has this heresy prevailed that women have even been bold enough to claim this right in Parliament (so I suppose we must understand the words, "in majoribus ejusdem regni conciliis"), and demand without a blush the right of preaching freely. This is a point which does not come out in our ordinary histories, but such

[1] Et arguit sic contra eos: "Sacerdotes prædicti habent ex speciali dono Dei notitiam et animum evangelizandi; sed nec licet Deo nec homini impedire eos, ne in hoc impleant verbum Dei, ut currat sermo Christi liberius: ergo non licet episcopis in hoc impedire dictos presbyteros" (Cap. 70, citing Sermon 62 of Wycliffe's *Sermones Epistolares*).

[2] Tanner gives among other works of Purvey's *Concordiam Scripturarum et Canonum.*

testimony makes the fact indisputable. Women, no doubt, were free to petition Parliament as well as men, and they joined in Lollard petitions. Walden adds that it is not a year since the Bohemian heretics in writings sent to different kingdoms demanded this for them as the removal of an injustice.

In a later chapter[1] Walden reverts to the subject of Purvey's book, of which he possesses a copy, taken from the author, who had just been committed to prison, and says it consists of three chapters: the first proving that all priests are bound to preach under penalty of sin; the second, that kings and knights and all faithful laymen are at liberty to do so; and the third, that women, too, may preach when they will. In Purvey's opinion it did not matter who preached, but what he preached, and he refers to the woman of Samaria as having "preached" the Christ to her fellow-citizens. This example of Lollard arguments may perhaps satisfy the reader without Walden's answer to it.

The rest of Article III. discusses the difference between the Christian priesthood and royal power. Wycliffe, as a follower of Ockham, maintained that royal power and authority were derived immediately from God, thus placing the authority of kings above that of priests; in opposition to which Walden insists that it is unlawful to appeal from episcopal judgment in matters of faith to any earthly prince.

The Third Book is entitled, "Of Religious Men, made perfect in the Law of Christ." Perfect religion was that set forth by Christ to the rich young man who had kept all the commandments, when He bade him sell all that he had to follow Him. So every profession truly made after the counsel of Christ was a religion of perfection which so far went beyond the common religion of Christians. The author, however, has to combat the Wycliffite arguments that

[1] Chap. 73, printed lxiii. by mistake in Blanciotti's edition.

Christ did not found any religious order, but only common Christianity; that superiority of merit corresponds to superiority of perfection only in being a substantial means of attaining it; and that a religion burdened with such signs and rites as the *particularis religio* which the author calls *perfectrix*, is thereby disqualified for beatitude. The author feels that in his answer he may expose himself to detraction, but he must not evade his task, and if, in endeavouring to fulfil it, he commit any indiscretion, he submits to the correction of the Holy See. Such is the drift of the prologue, and it really may suffice for an account of this third book itself, for the reader will hardly be interested in a lengthy argument drawn from Old and New Testament authorities no less than from later Christian history, though in some chapters of the second article, where religious vows are discussed, he comes naturally into conflict with the celebrated Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, the great opponent of the mendicant orders before Wycliffe. The third article is a vindication of the habits and usages of the religious orders.

Book IV. is in answer to Wycliffe's arguments against the different ways in which the clergy gained their living. And here the author regrets—a matter to be noted in the religious history of the time—that all orders do not make common cause together. The endowed clergyman cries out when Wycliffe would desecrate endowments, but he smiles and approves when he attacks the holy mendicants. The parson is distressed when Wycliffe attacks tithes or stipends, but he rejoices and finds him quite in the right when he pronounces a rash judgment, to the shame of all religion, touching manual labour. Wycliffe actually would not allow one order to live in wealth or another in poverty, though St. Paul approved both ways, saying that he knew both how to abound and how to suffer need (Phil. iv. 12). The author, accordingly,

first vindicates mendicancy as a religious mode of life, showing, in spite of some heretical writers, not only by Scripture, but by the general assent of old doctors, that Christ himself begged. This even Wycliffe was obliged to admit from Scripture, but he said that Christ only begged insinuatingly, not clamorously, like the friars, which the author also contests. Christ, he shows, not only begged himself, but taught His disciples to beg, and he answers various arguments against Christians doing the like. In Article II. he goes on to vindicate those orders of religious who lived by the labour of their hands, repudiating alike an opinion condemned by St. Augustine that this was wrong, and another, originated by William de Saint Amour, whom Wycliffe followed, that every religious man was bound to do it. In Article III. Wycliffe's arguments against the endowment of the Church are answered in fifteen chapters, and the work is concluded.

The book *de Sacramentis.*

Pope Martin V. was greatly pleased with the book, and desired Walden to write another on the Sacraments. This accordingly he did, intending to send it to the Pope through the medium of King Henry V., to whom the prologue is addressed, but Henry died before he had completed it. A very brief analysis of this work may be sufficient. The preface takes for its text Heb. xiii. 9: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines;" and, following in this the plan of the original *Doctrinale*, the writer again discusses various Wycliffite doctrines or modes of teaching, twelve in number this time, and partly the same as before. He warns readers how the heretics perverted the sense of Scripture, and falsely claimed the authority of various Fathers on their behalf; how they denied that Wycliffe had really aimed at teaching the things for which his teaching was condemned; how they had procured forged letters under the seal of the University of

Oxford in support of their doctrines; how Wycliffe himself had despised the judgment passed upon him by the Council, which he called "the Council of the Earthquake," and so forth. At the end of the eleventh *Doctrina* there is a reference to the condemnation and punishment of William Taylor, which had just occurred as he was writing. Thus it appears this part of the work was written in the beginning of March 1423. The book itself is divided into one hundred and sixty-four chapters, of which the first sixteen are devoted to a discussion of old and new sacramental heresies. Chapters 17 to 95 are on the Eucharist; chapters 96 to 110 on Baptism; chapters 111 to 115 on Confirmation; chapters 116 to 129 on Orders; chapters 130 to 133 on Matrimony; chapters 135 to 162 on Penance, and chapters 163 and 164 on Extreme Unction.

On the 10th August 1427 Pope Martin V. acknowledged the receipt of this new volume, which he said had been examined and universally approved, like its predecessor, by a company of grave and learned men,[1] and he asked the author to complete the good work by a third volume *de Sacramentalibus*—that is to say, on things connected with the Sacraments. Walden expressed himself as quite overcome by a sense of honour and responsibility, and of course he obeyed once more. Again, after a preface, he begins with ten chapters on the mischievous teachings of the Wycliffites, and then enters on the matter of the work, which is divided under twenty-four "titles," extending through one hundred and seventy chapters in all. "Titulus I." in fifteen chapters, is on Prayer, and even on this subject comes at once into conflict with Wycliffe, whose views are shown to be Pelagian. Wycliffe, indeed, had depreciated the set prayers of

The book *de Sacramentalibus.*

[1] They began their examination of the work on the 17th June and finished it on the 23rd July, when the volume was presented to the Pope in Consistory.

the Church and their prolixity, insinuating that a good life without prayer was better than such devotions. It may be observed that his teaching here was almost the contrary of that of Luther, who, insisting on justification by faith, really undervalued a good life. From this under Titulus II. the author is led to the subject of chants, which he claims to have been instituted by Christ and taught by the apostles; under Titulus III. to the apostolic origin and use of canonical "hours," and under Titulus IV. to the institution of the Mass and a disquisition on the sacred vessels and vestments, the altar, corporal, chalice, thurible and phial, the introit, lection, washing of the priest's hands, etc. Then under "titles" V. to VIII. are discussed the sacramental prayers and rites of Baptism, of Confirmation, of Order and of Penance. Titulus IX., which extends from chapter 73 to chapter 92, is devoted to the clergy and the religious orders, and the vindication of both from Wycliffite aspersions—a subject which is further developed under Titulus X., showing that clergy and monks are equally needful to the one body of Christ, and participate in the benefit of each other's prayers. Then in the further "titles" are discussed the value of general and special prayers, the practice of praying to saints, and of worshipping them and their relics, their canonization, the going on pilgrimage, the celebration of saints' days, the fabrics of churches, their ornaments and furniture, the building of houses for the religious orders, the adoration of the cross, special pilgrimages to images, and the dedication of churches.

This very brief analysis of the great work of Walden and its two supplements will suffice to show how thoroughly the whole ground of Church institutions and doctrine was examined and defended against Wycliffe. The work was authoritative, and no reply to it was even so much as attempted. The theory of the Church, it must be owned, was high, clear, and

symmetrical; but the confession is contained in the work itself that there was a very dangerous spirit of rebellion abroad which still supported itself by the influence of Wycliffe's name, and the plausible theory that all truth and all authority must find their justification in the Bible, while the true interpretation of the Bible was the privilege of an exclusive sect. Against mere popular sophistries like this the influence of a learned book could not speedily prevail, and Lollardy remained still among the people for several generations. Yet the book itself must have been far more effective for a generation or two than we are apt to imagine. The clergy, doubtless, were not all such as they ought to have been, even in the matter of education, for learning was certainly on the decline. But, as a body, they knew generally that Wycliffe had been very fully answered, and they knew, further, how the discipline of the Church in such matters had nearly put an end to anything like irresponsible preaching. So Lollard clergymen gradually became less outspoken, and the "tares" sown invisibly sprang up chiefly among the laity. Even from them, indeed, Church authority received more deference than it had done before; but it was an external deference rather than internal, and wherever there was real fervour it went rather to protect the outward authority than the inward mind of the Church.

Lollards become "the lay party."

The Lollards of this new age, accordingly, came to be called "the lay party" in the Church. Lollardy had become a popular influence with no particular pretensions to learning, least of all to scholastic training. Much of the language of the English Bible had been disseminated; and the native power of the words was sincerely felt by many who, with whatever disadvantages of training, still preferred living thoughts to mere formal observances. Nor were there wanting painful evidences of human error and

imperfection in that which named itself the Church of Christ, and claimed a right to rule over the kingdoms of this world in a way which the divine Founder of our religion absolutely refused to do himself. So respect for Church authority and contempt for Church authority grew up side by side. Indeed, the two sentiments were not incompatible, and if the Church was content with lip service, things were doing well.

But earnest men could not be content with this state of matters; and about twenty years later a very earnest churchman, whose discretion was not altogether equal to his zeal, began to take in hand the defence of the Church against Lollardy in a new fashion. It is impossible to withhold sympathy from such a divine as Reginald Pecock; for not only was he whole-hearted in the work to which he applied himself, but his method was one which really deserved success. He was thoroughly convinced that the Church's position was right and reasonable, and he believed that opposition might be disarmed if the Church would only condescend to the weakness of the unlearned laity, and defend itself, not by erudite treatises in Latin, but by writings in plain English adapted to the ordinary understanding.

Reginald Pecock.

Of the birth and parentage of this remarkable man we know virtually nothing, except that he is said to have been a Welshman, which is the more likely, as the papal bull which gave him his first bishopric calls him a priest of the diocese of St. David's. He is supposed to have been born towards the end of the fourteenth century, and to have received the rudiments of his education in his own country. But he studied at Oriel College, Oxford, of which he became a fellow in 1417, receiving at the same time ordination as acolyte and subdeacon from Bishop Fleming of Lincoln. He became a priest in 1421, and was admitted as bachelor of divinity in 1425, when the

celebrated Dr. Gascoigne was Chancellor of the University. His proficiency in theological studies was marked, and, under the patronage of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, he obtained, in 1431, the mastership of Whittington College in London along with a city rectory. Even by that time he seems to have begun writing books which were intended to reconcile Lollards to the Church by better arguments than the fires of Smithfield.

In 1444 Duke Humphrey's influence obtained for him the bishopric of St. Asaph. From that bishopric he was promoted to Chichester in 1450 by the ill-fated Duke of Suffolk, at the suggestion of Walter Hart, Bishop of Norwich, who had a very high opinion of Pecock's abilities, and who may have been interested in his great work *The Repressor*, supposed to have been written in the preceding year. Meanwhile, however, Pecock's path had not been altogether smooth. In the opinion of the academic Dr. Gascoigne he had owed a little too much to favour when on receiving his first episcopate he was made doctor of divinity at Oxford in his absence, by special grace, without any exercise, or responding to any other doctor, or keeping any scholastic act whatever, even after graduation. But this was nothing to the stir he created in 1447 by a sermon at Paul's Cross, in which he declared that preaching was no necessary part of a bishop's functions, and even vindicated occasional non-residence. Was this energetic bishop, promoted by court favour, going to be an unblushing defender of abuses? In nothing did the Lollards carry the public feeling with them so far as in their objection to the infrequency of preaching. Possibly the acts of Archbishop Arundel, intended to check irresponsible preaching, had in some cases tended to discourage the practice of preaching at all. Certain it is that the neglect of preaching had now become a subject of animad-

version, even by those who were not Lollards; while to the Lollard party themselves and those of the same school in later generations, even when the name ceased to be used, "unpreaching prelates" and "dusty pulpits"[1] constituted always a particular theme of reprobation.

But Pecock had no mind to vindicate real abuses, least of all from a personal love of ease. He was not an infrequent preacher himself—in fact, he preached much more than most other bishops did, and was busy with his pen besides, while no doubt discharging with assiduity all the duties incumbent on his position. The exact dates at which he composed or published his different works is uncertain. Among his principal early ones was his *Donet*, or introduction to the chief truths of the Christian religion, which is supposed to have been written about the year 1440. Then came his *Follower to the Donet*, probably about 1454, in which he complains of the premature publication of some other writings which he had only intended to circulate among friends, but which had been copied and had "run abroad" against his will. The great work, however, which he had been long preparing, came out probably about 1449; and it is of this work that we must more especially speak, for it was one long argument against the Lollards and their doctrine, which gives us a more vivid account of them than we receive from any other source. This work, after lying four hundred years in MS., was at length edited for the Rolls Series in 1860 by the late Dr. Babington, to whose able and well-written introduction I am indebted for the facts in the last two or three pages.

From the general character of his book we may infer that Lollardy had long ceased to inspire terror. No dangerous social revolutions from this cause were

[1] See Foxe, iii. 535, *note*: "You should be better occupied to shake off the dust from your dusty pulpits."

apprehended. Sir John Oldcastle was not forgotten —perhaps, even now men were beginning to keep his memory green by historic plays in which that military reformer of the Church was introduced as something between a highwayman and a fanatic; for there is no doubt that Shakespeare carried on a dramatic tradition of that kind, though he was induced to spare the feelings of a dominant Puritanism by changing the name of Oldcastle into Falstaff.[1] Be this, however, as it may, the Church had by this time recovered her influence, her order was generally submitted to, and Lollardy had become a mere sentiment, no longer seriously threatening the peace of society, but still mischievous in its way, and manifestly derogating from the respect due to a social organisation which claimed to rest upon divine authority. Pecock, accordingly, named his great work *The Repressing of over miche wyting of the Clergie*; but the book is more commonly known as *The Repressor*, from the form in which this title was docketed and modernised by a later hand — *The Represser of over myche blamyng the Clergie.*[2]

Pecock's *Repressor.*

That was the theme. The clergy, not individually, but as an order, were too much censured among the community, and Pecock wishes to inquire into the reasons for the censures commonly passed upon them, which, he felt, were far too inefficiently answered. The study of this book is, therefore, peculiarly interesting, because it reveals to us the origin of a religious philosophy which has been one of the most potent forces in English history. A philosophy of scriptural foundation, it began with the use of the Bible in English, and gathering strength through successive generations, proved powerful enough, in two hundred years after Pecock's day, really to

[1] See on this subject a paper by me "On the Historical Element in Shakespeare's Falstaff" (*Studies in English History*), and Halliwell's tract "On the Character of Sir John Falstaff."

[2] See p. 4 of the work compared with Babington's Introduction, p. lxii.

subvert for a time the English constitution. And though, after this great triumph, it lost much of its tyrannical power when the Church and nation once more righted themselves, its force was not entirely spent for two hundred years more. In fact, though sorely discomfited now, by the advance of civilisation through the various avenues of science, criticism, travel, and experience, it remains among us still, and a generation or two may pass even yet before it is wholly extinct.

For the Lollard philosophy was built on the sanctity of Holy Writ. The Bible was the Word of God, and must therefore be infallible. This, indeed, might have been conceded in the abstract—even the second of these two axioms—by logical-minded churchmen; but they would have maintained that the interpretation of this infallible book was the special function of the Church as an aggregate, and of its learned clergy, not of the individual. The Lollard would hear nothing of this. The infallible book was for the use of every devout Christian; and every humble-minded man had the power to interpret it aright. But if you had an infallible book capable of infallible interpretation by humble-minded men, what was the use of the Church's authority and guidance? If the humble-minded agreed in their views, as of course they must on this hypothesis, there arose a new Church of humble-minded men who had the true power of interpretation which the old Church must evidently have lost. The existing Church, therefore, was not the true Church, but was tending to become the Church of Antichrist,—as, in fact, the bolder spirits did not scruple to pronounce it. And, of course, the separation from Rome in the sixteenth century tended greatly to the predominance of this very sophistical philosophy.

Now, let us see how Bishop Pecock set himself to grapple with these errors even before they were

fully developed. In the prologue of his book he reminds the laity of St. Paul's commandment to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 2), to use patience as well as learning in reproof and exhortation. If such a charge was given by the apostle to Timothy, who as a bishop had a special duty to correct and reprove, it was still more incumbent on the laity to use gentleness in remonstrating against what they thought wrong. It might be that some laymen who passed over-hasty judgment on what the clergy ordained were animated, like the Jews of old (Rom. x. 2), by a good zeal, "but not according to knowledge"; for they had been the occasion of schism and disturbance for many years. And those who undertook to correct others ought certainly to look to themselves in the first place (according to Luke iv. 23 and vi. 42). But to stop the mouths of these lay censors who do so much mischief by their over-hasty judgments, he proposes to justify eleven "governances" of the clergy which some of them unjustly censured; among which he specially mentions at the outset the use of images in churches, the going on pilgrimages to saints, "and that pilgrimagis and offringis mowe be doon weel, not only prively but also openli, and not oonli so of lay men, but rather of preestis and of bischopis." These and other matters objected to he proposes to discuss *seriatim*. The book is to be divided into five parts, the first being a general argument and the other four parts special. As for any other "governauncis of the clergie," for which they really deserved "brotherly and neighbourly correption," Pecock is not concerned to defend them, and hopes they will be amended.

The first part of the book certainly interests us most. He starts with the observation that almost all the errors of "the lay party," in their unjust censures of the clergy, are founded on three erroneous "trowings" or opinions, which it was important in the first

place to refute. And the first of these "trowings" is given as follows :—

That no governaunce is to be holde of Cristen men the service or the lawe of God, save it which is groundid in Holi Scripture of the Newe Testament, as summe of the bifore seid men holden; or namelich (*i.e.* especially) save it which is groundid in the Newe Testament or in the Oold, and is not bi the Newe Testament revokid, as summe othere of hem holden.

That is to say, that no ordinances of the Church rightly claimed the obedience of Christians unless Scripture warrant could be shown for their observance. "In this trowing and holding," adds the Bishop,

thei ben so kete (*i.e.* so bold) and so smert and so wantoun that whanne ever eny clerk affermeth to hem eny governaunce being contrarie to her witt or plesauncie, though it ligge ful open and ful surelie in doom of resoun, and ther fore sureli in moral lawe of kinde (*i.e.* of nature), which is lawe of God, for to be doon, yit thei anoon asken "Where groundist thou it in the Newe Testament?" or "Where groundist thou it in Holi Scripture in such place which is not bi the Newe Testament revokid?" And if thei heere not where so in Holi Scripture it is witnessid, thei it dispisen and not receyven as a governaunce of Goddis service and of Goddis moral lawe. This opinioun thei weenen to be grounded, Mat. xxij° c'. where Crist seid to the Saduceis thus "Ye erren, not knowing Scripturis, neither the vertu or strengthe of God." . . . Also thei weenen this opinioun be groundid Johun v^e c'., where Crist seide to Jewis thus: "Serche ye Scripturis, for ye trowen you for to have everlasting lijf in hem, and thei ben whiche beren witnes of me."[1]

The second "trowing," or tenet of the sect, was that any Christian man or woman, meek and willing to understand the Scripture, would infallibly arrive at its true meaning, even if it were in the Apocalypse. This opinion they founded on a passage in Isaiah (lxvi. 2), translated in Wycliffe's Bible: "To whom

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, 5. 6.

schal y behold but to a litle pore man, broken in herte and trembling at mi wordis?" and on various other texts in praise of meekness. The third trowing —not quite consistent with meekness—was that when any one had thus gained an insight into the meaning of Scripture he should listen to no argument to the contrary which any clerk might propound, either from reason or Scripture, and especially to none from reason. For this they found warrant in some passages in the Epistle to the Colossians and the first chapter of First Corinthians, where the apostle warns disciples against being beguiled by philosophy and traditions of men, and shows that the wisdom of this world was to be despised.[1]

Before setting himself to confute these "trowings," Pecock feels it necessary to set forth briefly, for the benefit of the laity, the conditions required by logic for a sound argument. He cannot enter into a full discussion of the principles of logic as it is taught in the schools; but he heartily wishes it were taught to the common people in their mother tongue to prevent them indulging in such "ruydnes and boistosenes which thei han now in resonyng," for they would then know when an argument was conclusive and when it was not so, and thus learn to avoid errors which they continually fall into.[2] He then proceeds to enunciate and to justify the first of thirteen conclusions which he opposes to the first of the eleven erroneous trowings, viz. that it is not the true function of Scripture to serve as the foundation of any "governance, or deed, or service of God, or any law of God, or any truth" which man's reason may discover by the light of nature.[3] This is proved by six different lines of argument, with further illustrations,[4] and a very striking corollary is drawn—

Pecock wishes logic taught in English to the people.

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, 6, 7.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 8, 9.
[3] Pages 9-32.
[4] *Ibid.*

That whanne evere and where evere in Holi Scripture or out of Holi Scripture be writen eny point or eny governaunce of the seide lawe of kinde [*i.e.* of nature], it is more verrili writen in the book of mannis soule than in the outward book of parchemyn or of velym; and if eny semyng discorde be bitwixe the wordis writen in the outward book of Holi Scripture and the doom [*judgment*] of resoun write in mannis soule and herte, the wordis so writen withoutforth oughten be expowned and be interpretid and brought forto accorde with the doom of resoun in thilk mater; and the doom of resoun oughte not forto be expowned, glosid, interpretid, and broughte for to accorde with the seid outward writing in Holi Scripture of the Bible or ough-where [*anywhere*] ellis out of the Bible. Forwhi, whanne ever eny mater is tretid bi it which is his ground and bi it which is not his ground, it is more to truste to the treting which is mad ther of bi the ground than bi the treting ther of bi it which is not ther of the ground; and if thilke ij. tretingis oughten not discorde, it folewith that the treting doon bi it which is not the ground oughte be mad for to accord with the treting which is maad bi the ground. And therfore this corelarie conclusioun muste nedis be trewe.[1]

It may well surprise readers of a more modern date that a fifteenth century bishop should have committed himself in this way to a position which was positively rationalistic; and this, too, in an attempt to defend the Church against heretics! But so it actually was, and the position should be noted for reasons quite apart from the merits of Pecock's argument. That the Lollards were the reasoners and questioners who first challenged the dictates of an old indefensible theology by pure argument is a conception which we have seen already to be very wide of the mark. But here we have evidence that

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 25, 26. The spelling in this and other extracts from Pecock is as close to that of the original as may conveniently be presented. But there is a special letter in the original, in form somewhat like *z*, which would have required a special type cast for it. This letter has been changed into *gh*, which it represents in modern spelling; *v* has also been substituted for *u*, according to modern usage, and some other very slight changes have been made to aid the reader's apprehension of the words used.

the very contrary was the case. For it was not the Lollards, but Pecock who was rationalistic, and he was actually using rationalism to defeat the scriptural arguments of Lollardy. He made, apparently, one little slip, and said just a trifle more than he was ultimately able to defend. Yet what he meant was true enough, and ought to be appreciated in an age when science and criticism, of a kind unknown in his day, have shaken to the ground the main fallacy that he was endeavouring to combat. A little farther on he expresses himself in these striking words :— His rationalism.

> If eny man be feerd lest he trespace to God if he make over litle of Holy Scripture, which is the outward writing of the Oold Testament and of the Newe, y aske whi he is not afeerd lest he make over litle and apprise over litle the *inward Scripture* of the bifore spoken lawe of kinde, writen by God him silf in mannis soule whanne He made mannis soule to his ymage and liknes? Of which inward Scripture Poul spekith, Romans ij.[e] c'., and Jeremye in his xxxj.[e] chapiter; and Poul takith the same processe, Hebr. viij. c'. For certis this inward book or Scripture of lawe of kinde is more necessarie to Cristen men, and is more worthi than is the outward Bible and the kunnyng ther of, as fer as thei both treten of the more parti of Goddis lawe to man.[1]

Apart from style and phraseology, we might almost imagine a passage like this to have been written by some fervid modern rationalist rather than by a fifteenth century bishop; nay, the expression "inward Scripture" almost suggests Quaker authorship. The wonder is that the same battle remained to be fought through so many centuries. For Bishop Pecock, if he pushed the argument a little too far, was right in maintaining that the authority of Scripture cannot be exalted over that of logic; and he certainly was not alone in such a view. Nay, it had been insinuated without offence before his day that Scripture itself was not infallible in all its statements. For in Higden's *Polychronicon*, the great historical encyclopædia of

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 51, 52.

the preceding century, it is said in the preamble that certainty in historical matters is not always to be looked for, seeing that even the apostle Paul does not assert that whatsoever things were written are necessarily true, but "Whatsoever things were written were written for our learning" (Rom. xv. 4);[1] and we do not hear that this remark was ever censured by episcopal authority. In fact, the philosophy of that day did not necessarily attribute historical infallibility to the Bible.[2] The sacred text, no doubt, was considered true in all its parts; but the kind of truth which it contained might be matter of speculation.

Pecock has no hesitation about his own view. He considers that the whole purpose for which God ordained Holy Scripture was to serve as a foundation for articles of faith, and also to bear witness to those moral truths which were already founded in "law of kind"—that is to say, "in doom of reason," as he himself explains it. Reading the Scriptures, no doubt, incited and encouraged men the better to keep those moral laws which were founded in "doom of reason," but the Scriptures themselves were the foundation only of articles of faith, of which some were not laws at all, as, for instance, that God made heaven and earth in the beginning of time, while others were laws such as "that each man ought to be baptized in water if he may come thereto."[3] On the other hand, it was not the function of "moral law of kind" (or moral philosophy) to establish any article of faith grounded

[1] See Babington's edition of Trevisa's Higden (Rolls Series), i. 18, 19.

[2] Nor indeed does Biblical infallibility appear to have been strongly maintained even by the Reformers generally. In the Thirty-nine Articles it is not explicitly set forth, though the very careful language of the Sixth Article would, no doubt, have been understood by many as carrying it by implication. Indeed, the authorities of the Church of Rome were before the Reformers in setting it forth on the ground that as God was its author Holy Scripture could not err (see decree of the Council of Trent, Session IV.). It was on this ground, as every one knows, that Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition. Yet the doctrine is still acknowledged by the Church of Rome, and has been reaffirmed in our own day by Pope Leo XIII.

[3] Pecock's *Repressor*, p. 35.

in Holy Scripture, for all that moral philosophy established was grounded in "doom of man's reason." Yet books of such philosophy might very well bear witness to conclusions of faith grounded in Holy Scripture, and confirm them. By far the greater part of God's law to man was grounded, not in Holy Scripture, but "in the inward book of law of kind and of moral philosophy."[1]

From this it further followed that no man could fully understand Scripture where it appealed to moral virtues which were not positive law of faith, without being well versed in moral philosophy; and the knowledge of that subject was quite indispensable to Christian men. Even the use of the sacraments, Pecock somewhat strangely maintained, though founded both in reason and in Scripture, was more truly justified by the former, and the unlearned laity ought to value the help of learned clerks.[2]

Lollard views of Scripture.

But the Lollards appealed to various texts in proof that the Bible could be understood without special learning. One of these was a text (1 Cor. xiv. 38), the translation of which in Wycliffe's Bible—"Sotheli if eny man unknowith he schal be unknowun"—is very different from that of our Authorised Version.[3] Wycliffe, however, translated from the Vulgate, while King James's translators followed a Greek text, and the Lollard interpretation of the passage had a very serious aspect indeed. For it meant that ignorance of the sacred writings was inexcusable; and any one who had not made it his business to learn them, especially to learn the New Testament, would be "unknown of God for to be any of His." Such a view naturally made a marked difference between these men and others, and they called themselves "known

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 37-40.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 43-6.

[3] "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." The Revised Version, however, says in a marginal note that many authorities read, "But if any man knoweth not, he is not known."

men" to indicate the fact. So that in conversation one would ask another, "Is he a known man?" and if a negative reply were given, it was considered unsafe to deal with him.[1]

Another text bearing, in Lollard eyes, the like awful significance was 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, translated thus by Wycliffe, "That and if oure Evangelie is covered it is covered to hem whiche spillen [*i.e.* who perish]; in which (*whom*) god of this world hath blindid the myndis or wittis of unfeithful men that the lighting or cleering of the Evangelie of the glorie of Crist, which is the ymage of God, schine not." The gospel was hid to none but to those who were lost; any one in a state of salvation would be able to understand the true meaning of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, including even the Apocalypse, by devout study. The "known men" were children of salvation; all others were in danger of perishing. Yet Pecock would wager his arm that "the very law of kind and of faith (as it is purely in itself, and so the substantial law of God to man in earth)" was worse known to such men than to many others.

There was also the text in the Apocalypse (xxii. 18, 19) against any one adding to or taking from "the words of the book of this prophecy," which they took to be either the whole Bible or the New Testament; and they considered that commentaries and glosses came under the curse denounced against such additions.

To expose such misinterpretations was an easy task. The ignorance spoken of in the first text could not have been ignorance of the New Testament, of which some books, such as the Second Epistle to the Corinthians and the book of Revelation, were as yet unwritten; and St. Paul's words would have been equally true before any single book of the New Testament canon was composed; for it was always

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, p. 53.

true that whoever, either by negligence or of his own free will, was ignorant of the law would be unknown of God unless he made amends for his fault. Nor did the text make mention of any writing, and the knowledge required could be got better out of other writings than the Scriptures. So also in the second text, the gospel spoken of was an existing gospel, though all the books of the New Testament had not then been written. It was, in fact, the gospel of God which existed before a single word of the New Testament was written, and which Christ himself at His ascension had ordered His disciples to preach everywhere. The text said simply that this gospel was not obscure to those who wished to believe it, and that those who did not were in a perishing condition. As to the third text, the curse denounced was evidently against those who misused the book of Apocalypse itself, and, moreover, it was against making the book longer or shorter than it was, not against adding a gloss or commentary which neither increased nor diminished the words of the book itself.[1]

Having enforced these arguments at some length, Pecock then takes cognisance of one great cause which had contributed to the first of the erroneous opinions he has been controverting, and that is, that the reading of the Bible, especially the historical parts of the Old Testament and of the New, "is miche delectable and sweete, and drawith the reders into a devocioun and a love to God and fro love and deinte (*i.e.* fondness) of the world." This he had known to be the case with some readers.

The delight in the Bible.

And thanne bi cause that the seid reeding was to hem so graceful and so delectable, and into the seid eende so profitable, it fil into her conceit forto trowe ful soone, enformyng and tising ther to unsufficientli leerned clerkis, that God had made or purveied the Bible to mennis behove after, as it were, or bi, the utterist degre of his power and kunnyng for to so

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 53-65.

ordeyne, and therefore al the hoole Bible (or, as sum men trowiden, the Newe Testament) schulde conteyne al that is to be doon in the lawe and service to God bi Cristen men, withoute nede to have ther with eny doctrine (*i.e.* any learning).[1]

He had even himself been told that no man ever erred by reading and studying the Bible, though there was no book in the world from which a man might sooner take occasion to err, as he had shown in another book entitled *The Just Apprising of Holy Scripture.* The Lollards were like the early Jewish converts to Christianity who, as St. Paul showed, over magnified their Scriptures; but both in this book and in *The Just Apprising* Pecock was doing what he could to correct their mistaken estimate by showing that the provinces of Scripture and of moral philosophy were perfectly distinct, and that the one must not be allowed to usurp the functions of the other. But lest some of "the lay party" should object that even among the writings of the Fathers passages might be found in support of their opinions and against his, he was beginning to compose in Latin another book called *The Just Apprising of Doctors.* To that book he would refer those interested in the subject, seeing that none of those with whose opinions he was now dealing valued patristic authority themselves, though they might perhaps think that it could be used with effect against Pecock's view.[2]

Still, there were two objections which the "Bible men" might raise to Pecock's argument: first, reason was fallible, and God could hardly wish them to rely on a fallacious guide in matters which concerned His service; second, Holy Scripture was a thing to be revered as the source from which the whole Christian Church derived its faith, and God would hardly approve of subjecting it to the fallible judgment of reason. To the first of these objections Pecock

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, p. 66.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 66-72.

answers that it is important to man to have sure knowledge of visible truths by the power of sight; but what other eyes or seeing power has God given him than such as sometimes fail? It is important also that he have sure knowledge of audible truths through his ears; but what other ears or power of hearing has God given him than such as sometimes mislead? So also it is important to be able to move about with legs and feet, but what limbs will not occasionally stumble? No wonder, then, that God has given us no power of reasoning that will not sometimes err. We must simply do our best with every faculty we have. God will forgive involuntary error. But the surest guide is the judgment of reason in a complete and formal syllogism when both premises are known as surely or likely to be true. Such a judgment never fails, and can never possibly err. The only cause of fallacy is hasty judgments before the arguments are reduced into the form of syllogisms or the premises sufficiently verified.[1]

As to the second objection, from considerations already shown it is clear that it would not be unbecoming in God to ordain the human reason and judgment to be "rulers of Holy Writ" in all the truths therein set forth. It is alleged that Holy Scripture was worthier than "doom of reason." But what was Holy Scripture? It might be taken to mean the letters of various shapes and figures written on parchment or vellum; but in this sense it was not holier or better than any other writing "which hath like good ink and is like craftily figured." In another sense it may be understood as "the kunnyng wherebi the thing is kunne which is signified and bitokened by the now seid outward Holi Writt"; or it may be taken for the outward writing coupled with the knowledge of the truths signified thereby. So also "doom of reason" may be taken in two senses. In one sense

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 73-80.

it is the act of reasoning by making syllogisms; in another sense it is the cognisance of the conclusion come to by such syllogisms. Now, if in the second objection Holy Scripture be understood in the second sense, and doom of reason in the second sense, surely Holy Writ, where it rehearses and teaches "moral law of kind," is less worthy than "moral law of kind" itself, and therefore less worthy than "doom of reason" taken in the second sense, for here it only borrows the truths which it sets forth from "moral law of kind." Certainly if Holy Scripture be worthier in any of its truths than the doom of reason, it is in matters of faith which are not laws to man, and which reason cannot ground, such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and so forth. And yet, whether Scripture be more profitable to man than doom of reason in the second sense to enable him to serve God and deserve meed in heaven, the author will not discuss in his book, but may perhaps in other writings "to hearers of higher understanding." He will only refer to proofs already given that all the faith grounded on Scripture which is a positive law to man is not so valuable or necessary for him "as is the said doom of reason, being moral law of kind."[1]

Here the author seems to have felt for a moment that he was glancing at arguments above the heads of those that he was addressing; and he goes on to say that if he has written or said more "than wole anoon accorde with the capacitè of the Bible men" with whom he is disputing, he would rather do so than either say or write less, and so leave them under an impression that their two objections could not be answered. For they might thus be led to believe that by poring over the Bible alone they would be able to solve all difficulties without taking counsel of "substancial clerkis weel leerned in logic and in moral

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 80-84.

philosophie." If there were not such men to expound Scripture, or the laity would not attend to their teaching, but trust only their own wits and texts of the Bible before them, it would give rise to such various opinions "that al the world schulde be cumbrid therwith, and men schulden accorde to gidere in keping her service to God as doggis doon in a market whanne ech of hem terith otheris coot." One man would understand a text one way, another in another way, and a third in a third way. For wherever Holy Writ speaks of any point of "moral law of kind," the language is such as requires "a redressing of it into accordance with lawe of kinde and with doom of reson"; and there would be no end of strife if there were no judge to settle disputes. This was the very cause of the ruin of "the worthy city and university of Prague" and of the whole realm of Bohemia. And now, after the destruction of that realm, people were glad to return to the Catholic faith and to build up again what was burnt and thrown down. So true it is, as our Lord said, that "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation"; and Pecock earnestly prays that God will keep England from a like fate. Men could only decide differences by the use of reason, and who so fit as men specially trained to the work?

The laity need the guidance of learned men.

And therefore, ye Bible men, bi this here now seid, which ye must nedis graunte, for experience which ye han of the disturblaunce in Beeme, and also of the disturblaunce and dyverse feelingis had among you silf now in Ynglond, so that summe of you ben clepid *Doctour-mongers*, and summe ben clepid *Opinioun-holders*, and summe ben *Neutralis*, that of so presumptuose a cisme abhominacioun to othere men and schame to you it is to heere; rebuke now you silf, for as miche as ye wolden not bifore this tyme allowe that resoun and his doom schulde have such and so greet interesse in the lawe of God and in expownyng of Holi Scripture, as I have seid and proved hem to have.[1]

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 85-8.

So the "Bible men," who would not rely upon reason but on humility to interpret Scripture rightly, were split up into sects among themselves, and clearly in need of guidance for their own part. But Pecock must also warn them that as one star differs from another in brightness, so one clerk differs from another in learning; and he would advise any one of them to be careful in selecting such a counsellor :—

> And in special be waar that thou not accepte, chese and take a clerk for to be sufficient to thee into the now seid purpos bi this aloon, that he mai were a pilioun [a doctor's hat] on his heed; neither bi this that he is a famose and a plesaunt precher to the peple in a pulpit; neither by this, that he is a greet and thikke rateler out of textis of Holi Scripture or of Doctouris in feestis or in othere cumpanyingis: for certis experience hath ofte taught and mai here teche surely ynough that summe werers of piliouns in scole of dyvynyte han scantli be worthi for to be in the same scole a good scoler; and ful manye of the ij^{e} and iij^{e} soortis appeering ful gloriose to the heering of the lay parti, and also summe of othere maner of clerkis, whanne thei schulden come forto dispute and examyne and trie and juge in harde doutis of Goddis lawe, were not worthi forto therto unnethis opene her mouth.[1]

The office of preaching, no doubt, was profitable for exhortation, but it was not so valuable for teaching, which required proof and argument. For many whose schooling had advanced no further than grammar had a great command of texts in the Bible or in Doctors (*i.e.* the Fathers), and took people's fancy by pouring out texts, narratives, and parables; but if they were well apposed in any of those texts and parables, they could not defend or fully interpret any of them. The neglect of these considerations has been "a great cause of the wickedly infected school of heresy among the lay people in England, which is not yet conquered." Pecock wishes heartily that the King would take as much pains to reclaim England

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, p. 88.

from this "wicked school" of heresy as he does to conquer Normandy and France. He also wishes that degrees in the schools were only given to those who had shown their competence in the faculty in which they graduated. He wishes preaching duly honoured, but logic, philosophy, and divinity should not be neglected. For people were too easily led away. Both men and women had come to Pecock telling him, "Thus hath a doctor said in this matter"; and "Thus hath a doctor said in that matter"; and "Thus hath this famous preacher preached." To which he had made answer: "Though he, and he, and he, and he have so taught and preached, yet it is not therefore and thereby ever the rather true; but it is untrue, and needs must be untrue, and may be showed and proved undoubtedly to be untrue." He did not mean to say that he never fell into error himself, but he felt bound to warn people from his experience of the failings of other preachers.[1]

Having devoted so much argument to the refutation of the first erroneous "trowing," Pecock now proceeds to deal with the second, which he disposes of much more briefly by the evidence, first of experience, and then of reason, and the third, which he disproves both by Scripture and by reason. Then a fourth opinion was brought to his notice which was also very dangerous, viz. that if any man not only was meek, but would keep the law of God, he would have true understanding of Holy Scripture without any teaching but God's; but those who are not "true livers in the law of God" would never understand the true sense of Scripture by any amount of exertion with the help of others like them. And as they considered that the bishops, archdeacons, and clergy generally "lived all out of God's law," they believed that they all taught amiss. This fourth opinion it was easy to refute by positive experience; for Pecock

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 88-91.

had full evidence that many of the very men who held it were well known among their neighbours as persons of evil life; indeed, many of their most influential leaders were most vicious persons, and they could not deny it, for it could be clearly proved against them. And yet these very men pretended that they had the true sense of Scripture! So it was evident that they could not really hold the opinion they professed, and Pecock hopes they would not henceforth attempt to maintain it for very shame. He then briefly replies to the scriptural argument adduced in its favour, and as to the similar charge brought by some against the clergy, while he acknowledges that even prelates sin, as they are men and not angels, he maintains that the charges against them are exaggerated and sometimes mistaken. Acts, moreover, should be judged by their motives, not by the mere facts. He himself has heard of censures passed upon him for the government of his diocese, which he is sure the censors themselves would have revoked if they had known all the circumstances. And no doubt other bishops suffer in the same way. Some men, "lettered in grammar only," seemed to think prelates should govern still in the same fashion as in past times, notwithstanding how change of times required change of methods.[1]

Character of the Lollards.

There is a good deal in these remarks that deserves careful consideration; for, whatever trouble befell the writer afterwards, it was not on account of anything he had said about the character of the Lollards, either as reasonable men or as good citizens. That their modes of thinking were altogether unreasonable he shows very distinctly; and that the characters of many of these promoters of new doctrine were positively bad, he asserts in such a way as evidently defied contradiction. In short, a movement which sprang among purer-minded men, touched by the wonderful beauty

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 92-110.

and "sweetness" of Holy Writ in their mother tongue, had, for want of proper control, lent itself greatly to the guidance of men who were not pure-minded, or pure in morals either; for it encouraged an unreasoning hatred both of the clergy and of the established institutions of religion, and destroyed the sanctions by which the Church was endeavouring to uphold the eternal principles of morality. No good and thoughtful man, Pecock held, could really be a Lollard; but unhappily many were beguiled by shallow reasonings into paths full of social danger.

Pecock next proposes to begin his defence of the eleven Church ordinances, or "governances," most impugned; but before treating of them individually he lays down, in the systematic fashion of the schoolmen, a general argument founded upon three rules from which four conclusions follow. The first rule, put concisely in modern language, is that any ordinance expressly enjoined, whether by God, man, angel, or Scripture, requires also the doing of everything which it logically involves; if it can be carried out in different ways, a discretion, no doubt, is allowed, but that way is best which fulfils the ordinance most effectually. The second is that the same is true where an ordinance is not expressly enjoined by words, but the will of the authority is shown by example or otherwise. The third is that wherever the authority in either of these ways indicates that an ordinance should be observed, it thereby enjoins or sanctions everything necessary to its observance. These rules, he says, are obvious. If he, Pecock, being in London within Whittington College, ordered, or advised, or suggested to his servant to go and give an attentive hearing to a sermon at Paul's Cross, he of course ordered, advised, or suggested that the man should learn somewhat by that sermon and take some of its teaching to heart. Also, it implied that Pecock ordered or counselled

him to go out at the College gate. Further, that as there were several ways to Paul's Cross, he left him free to take whichever way he pleased, but that if there was any reason for avoiding one way he would approve of his taking a more convenient one.[1]

Hence follow the four conclusions: First, that Scripture in teaching us to love God with all our hearts, directs us to love all that God wishes us to love and hate all that He wishes us to hate. From these principles arise all the points of His law and service; and these require meditation, which again requires such means to maintain it as reading and hearing of Holy Scripture and other writings, listening to sermons, beholding of pictures and images, and going to places where holy men have lived or where holy men dwell, or where relics of them remain. And so Holy Scripture sanctions all these methods. Secondly, each of the eleven ordinances which he proposes to justify is virtually commanded or recommended by Holy Scripture. Thirdly, each of them is thus really grounded on Holy Scripture. Fourthly, if the bidding, counselling, or witnessing of Holy Scripture to a truth of "moral law of kind" were a grounding in Scripture in the sense indicated in previous passages of his treatise, undoubtedly the whole of the eleven ordinances which he proposes to vindicate were really grounded in Holy Scripture properly understood.[2]

But in confirmation of conclusions (1) and (2), even if it be contended "that each governaunce of God's moral law and service is grounded" in the New Testament or the Bible, it cannot be maintained that it must be so grounded expressly; and if it be so grounded "includingly," or by inference, by the above rules, it will be hereafter shown that each of the eleven Church ordinances or "governaunces" which he proposes to defend is so grounded; while proofs

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 110-13. [2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 113-16.

are given at some length that many things are lawful in God's service which are not expressly enjoined. And so ends the first part of *The Repressor*, which is divided into twenty chapters.[1]

Justification of Church ordinances.

Of the remaining four parts it is not necessary to speak at length. The second, which is also in twenty chapters, is a vindication of images and pilgrimages; the third, a justification of the endowments of the clergy. The fourth is an answer to some Lollard views that there should be no clerical orders but priests and deacons, and that all priests should be of one degree. This theory, as Pecock's editor observes, took its rise from Wycliffe, who in his *Dialogue* asserts that there were no other orders but these two in the primitive Church; that a priest and a bishop were the same in St. Paul's time, and that the dignities of pope and cardinals, patriarchs, and archbishops, were of later invention. But Pecock shows the lawfulness of a variety of ranks among the clergy, in doing which, unhappily, he falls into the same strange blunder that we have seen Archbishop Arundel had committed before him, of declaring that Christ made Peter head of the apostles when he called him Cephas. This error he extends still further by claiming for it most untruly the authority of St. Jerome, to whom he refers as stating that *Cephas* was not a Hebrew, but a Greek word, signifying head, whereas St. Jerome, on the contrary, says that it is a Hebrew word equivalent to the Greek and Latin *petra*, signifying rock. Pecock also vindicates the clergy's right to make ordinances, though he admits that an excessive number of positive laws is objectionable.

The fifth part is a vindication of the religious orders, showing incidentally that men led better lives within them than they would have done outside them. The writer also vindicates their possession of stately mansions, where they may offer hospitality

[1] Pecock's *Repressor*, pp. 117-30.

to lords and ladies who desire to avoid much intercourse with the world, and of large churches seemingly unsuitable to mendicants, where great congregations came to hear them preach on rainy days. He even justifies the practice of the Franciscans who literally observed their rule not to touch money by counting it with a stick,—a practice which, he observes, could not tend to make them greater lovers of money than they otherwise would be. In this wise six of the eleven "governances" are upheld. There remain now five to be discussed, for a full justification of which the author in each case refers to some of his other writings; so that it only concerns us here to note the subjects. They were, first (the seventh ordinance objected to), the invocation of saints and intercessions offered by priests for particular persons; then (eighth) the costly ornaments, bells, banners, and the like, inside churches, which were considered not only wasteful, but things tending to idolatry and superstitious pilgrimages; ninth, the use of sacraments, which were held to be "pointis of wicchecraft and blindings, brought into Cristen men bi the feend and the anticrist and hise lymes." Not only were baptism and confirmation objected to, but that highest sacrament of all, the body and blood of Christ, was scorned and hated and called by foul names. Tenth, the clergy, in certain causes, took oaths and induced others to do so,—a thing which some of the lay people held to be expressly against God's commandment. Eleventh, and last, the clergy are reproved by some for not speaking out against capital punishments and against war, whether among Christians or between Christians and heathens, for all killing was unlawful, for whatever offences. All these objections and censures Pecock had fully answered elsewhere.

Such are the contents of this very curious and interesting book, of which it must surely be said that its merits were great, whatever we may feel of its

blemishes and shortcomings. These, indeed, are comparatively few, but, unfortunately, there was something in the main argument which the Church could not overlook. We are grateful to Pecock for showing us, more clearly than any other writer, what Lollardy actually was. Through his pages we can even sympathise not a little with its origin—seeing that it arose from that sense of "sweetness" in Holy Writ which may not untruly be called the witness of the Holy Ghost within us to His own work in past times. But private and individual interpretation was the danger, especially when it led men to undervalue that reasoning faculty which is necessary to the right apprehension and proper application of the truths of Revelation. Here, undoubtedly, the Lollards went astray; but Pecock, unfortunately, did not see that he was going astray himself very much in the same way. To convince the multitude that the faith and usages of the Church were reasonable was in itself a most excellent aim. But to exalt "doom of reason" over the very authority which supplied the fundamental *data* of belief was an error not unlike that of those who wrongly regarded themselves as humble-minded readers of the Scriptures. He found, like a great modern thinker,[1] "the seat of authority" within himself, and unwarily announced a principle which only required to be pushed to its natural conclusion to destroy belief in Revelation altogether.

Pecock's sentiments stir up opposition.

His fervid intellect thus isolated him from his contemporaries, and not unnaturally brought about his fall. So keen a thinker, impatient even of scriptural authority where it seemed to conflict with reason, was not likely to treat minor authorities with overmuch respect. Even to a quotation from the Fathers he had been known to say, "Pooh, pooh!" The popularity of the friars did not prevent him

[1] Dr. Martineau.

speaking of them as "pulpit bawlers"; and since the deaths of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and the Duke of Suffolk he does not seem to have had powerful friends among the lords of either party in the State, Yorkist or Lancastrian. At a council held apparently in October 1457 the lords refused to proceed to business while he was present. The very fact that he had written in English on profound subjects and spoken with scorn of the old doctors, marked him as a dangerous man. "He had even," says Mr. Babington, "made a new creed of his own, and denied that the Apostles' Creed was composed by the apostles!"[1] But this was by no means all; and if we would understand the violent rush of public sentiment against him we may appreciate it best from scattered notices in the writings of his contemporary, the garrulous Dr. Gascoigne.

What Dr. Gascoigne says of him.

The first of all his offences evidently was that to which the doctor again and again reverts, his famous Paul's Cross sermon in 1449, maintaining that a bishop was not bound to preach by reason of his office as bishop. Along with this he had even then given vent to his other heresy, that a man should trust reason rather than authority, and he had defended some ecclesiastical abuses. But the vindication of non-preaching bishops was, in Gascoigne's opinion, the parent of all evils. It was very agreeable doctrine at the time, of course, to such of his brother bishops as wished to take things easily; but the disastrous results very soon became apparent. From day to day matters grew worse for the prelates. Occupied with civil business and affairs of state many of them had already left their dioceses unvisited for years. Adam de Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester, was Keeper of the Privy Seal, and William Ayscough, Bishop of Salisbury, was the King's confessor. This was too much in accordance with the bad turn many things had

[1] *Repressor*, Preface, xxxvii.

been taking, for before the days of Henry VI. the Kings of England had been wont to select as confessors men who were merely ripe scholars and doctors of theology, leaving bishops free to attend to their own proper cures. Then John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury, a man even of bastard birth (such great irregularities had crept in), was Chancellor of England; while Marmaduke Lumley, Bishop of Carlisle, and afterwards of Lincoln, was Lord High Treasurer; Walter Lyard, or Hart, Bishop of Norwich, was the Queen's confessor resident in Court, and William Booth, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, was her chancellor.[1]

Gascoigne's hatred of abuses somewhat outran his accuracy in relating them. Bishops had served in royal offices, even of a secular nature, long before Henry VI.'s day; and Archbishop Stafford was born in wedlock. But court employment of the clergy was always attended with spiritual dangers. Bishops might be more capable than secular lords of the work of governing a kingdom; but it was a breach of the old ecclesiastical theory, and it exposed them, on the other hand, to popular ill-will. For if, deserting their proper functions, they became responsible for the state of the realm, that responsibility was liable to be brought home to them in very unpleasant ways. And so it actually was; for in the very year after Pecock's sermon at Paul's Cross, Bishop Moleyns was murdered by a mob at Portsmouth, and Bishop Ayscough by another mob in Wiltshire. Even as the King's confessor, the rioters held that Ayscough

[1] *Loci e Libro Veritatum* (passages selected from Gascoigne's *Theological Dictionary*). By J. E. T. Rogers, pp. 38-42. Pecock himself, according to Gascoigne, had previously written and preached that bishops ought to reside in their dioceses and preach both by word and example, but, after having, by the influence of worldly men, obtained a Welsh bishopric, he was in some years scarcely seen, or only for a short time, in his diocese, and in London he declared that bishops were not bound to preach to the people—that is to say, in the popular sense of the word preach, viz., to deliver a set discourse on some particular text. This mode of preaching, he said, had come in with the Friars, and was really modern (pp. 18, 44).

should have insisted on the amendment of much that was amiss in the kingdom, and if he was not listened to should have given up his office. But the authorities took no warning. For even then it was that Pecock himself was promoted from St. Asaph to Chichester as Bishop Moleyns' successor, notwithstanding that the principle he had maintained at Paul's Cross had been discussed in the schools at Oxford, and denounced by almost all the learned doctors in England in speech and writing. And so far had he carried his novel ideas, that in a debate with Dr. Millington in London, he had actually conceded that a bishop could not preach in a parish church in his own diocese without leave of the rector or vicar.[1]

Not only were those two bishops murdered and several others robbed in that terrible year 1450, but many rectors and vicars in Kent and in the west of England were robbed as well. Other bishops besides had their houses thrown down and expected death daily. People of every grade would cry out "Woe to the bishops, who are endowed, who wish to be called lords and served with bended knees, who ride with so many pompous horses, and will do nothing in preaching the Word for the health of souls! For they either know not how to preach or cannot do it, being encumbered with secular affairs or the delights of the body, or else because they cannot preach truly unless they denounce those evils of which they themselves are guilty; nor do they preach good works, which they themselves neglect to do, but deride or do not consider those who actually do them." This, according to Dr. Gascoigne, was the common saying everywhere. And that same

[1] Gascoigne, *u. s.* 40. Dr. Millington had preached at Paul's Cross himself shortly after Pecock's sermon in defence of bishops not preaching, and said he would maintain, on penalty of his head, that the kingdom would never prosper till those who favoured Pecock's conclusion met with condign correction, p. 44.

year the Duke of York came over from Ireland[1] —an event which produced everywhere more than usual agitation, importing quite a new turn of affairs, whether for good or evil—it could hardly be for the latter.[2]

His fall.

In 1457 the clamour against Pecock was so great that he was expelled from a Council held at Westminster. By that time he had been writing English books for twenty years, not much to the mind of steady-going old churchmen and university dons, like Gascoigne, nor, it is to be feared, quite so much to the edification of the unlearned as he ardently desired. But he had got into serious disgrace the year before by a letter which he wrote to Thomas Canyng, Mayor of London. What the actual contents of that letter were we do not know; but the Mayor thought them so very dangerous that he sent the letter to the King, and both the King and his lords were greatly incensed. For they found that it contained suggestions of a change in the faith, and even of popular tumults, together with scandalous imputations on the great lords of the kingdom, whom Pecock claimed as adherents of himself and of his English writings. What he had said about the Apostles' Creed added to the general horror; for he had not only denied that it was made by the apostles, but he had denied several articles in it both by words and by writings, and for that reason he himself had composed a long new creed in English which was condemned at London by the two archbishops and a number of the bishops. The sentence of condemnation was read in London at Paul's Cross

[1] Gascoigne says "against his will by the King's orders" (*contra voluntatem suam, ex mandato Regis Angliæ Henrici Sexti*). That he came over by royal mandate does not appear elsewhere, and seems against probability. Nor does he say so himself in his letter to the King (see *Paston Letters*, Introduction). The Court, in fact, by no means wished for his presence. But his friends may have been able to procure a royal mandate that he should come over and clear himself of charges made against him in his absence.

[2] *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, 41, 42.

in 1457, on Sunday within the octaves of St. Martin (*i.e.* Sunday, November 13).[1]

This, in fact, was the result of the council already mentioned, when the lords would not proceed to business till he was expelled. They insisted on his books being examined, and he was summoned to appear at Lambeth before the Archbishop on St. Martin's Day, the 11th November, and bring them with him. He did so, though he explained beforehand that some of them had been circulated prematurely before they had received his own final corrections, and that he would not like to be responsible for any that were more than three years old. Nine of them were submitted to twenty-four doctors, who reported to the Primate and three other bishops appointed to try him that they contained many errors and heretical opinions. An incident in his examination recorded by Gascoigne is that George Nevill, bishop-elect of Exeter, a young man of twenty-four, whose elevation to that see—or rather to the profits of the see, a year before—was a papal scandal, assailed him passionately with the words, "My lord of Chichester, God of His just judgment wills you to undergo these great indignities because you most unworthily reproved and denied to be true the writings of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Pope, as well as the works of other saints." The young man was not among the judges, but only a looker-on at the proceedings; but Bishop Pecock replied humbly, "I am sorry I have so written, for I was not sufficiently well informed."[2] At the beginning of the proceedings he had demanded of the court that he should not be judged by the appointed divines, but by his equals in scholastic disputation, and he did not count English bishops such, for they were believed

[1] *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, 212-14.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 210, 213. Cp. about Bp. Neville, 16, 17.

to have been found unskilful; but his request was not allowed.

A thundercloud had burst upon his head, and though he had long seen it approaching he was unprepared. In comparatively old writings new matter of accusation had been found; and there were passages that he had corrected himself, and others that he wished to correct. His writings still extant bear numerous marks of erasure and cancellation.[1] Yet, bold as many of his arguments were, his object had been to defend, not to subvert the authority of the Church; and now that authority had turned against himself! Some of his criticisms of popular errors were undoubtedly sound. His denial that the Apostles' Creed was composed by the apostles will not be denounced in our day; and his statement that the article about Christ's descent into hell was no part of the original formula will not be contested either. But he carried matters to a dangerous length by his depreciation of the Fathers, and especially where in his book on Faith he had objected to the saying of St. Gregory, that "Faith has no merit where human reason offers the proof."[2] Gascoigne's theory (and that of most people, no doubt) was that such doctors of old could be judged only by their peers—saints by saints, just as lords in the English Parliament could be judged only by their peers.[3] And Pecock, after all, had not the courage of a saint or the confidence of a martyr. Doubtless, though he had said many things truly, he felt that he had said some things amiss.

On the 21st November (the morrow of St. Edmund the King and Martyr) he revoked divers conclusions contained in his books before Archbishop Bourchier and a number of other bishops and doctors. A week

[1] See Gascoigne's *Lib. Verit.*, 211, and Babington's Introduction, xxxix.
[2] "Fides non habet meritum cui ratio humana præbet experimentum."
[3] *Loci e Libro Veritat.*, 101.

His condemnation.

later, on the 28th, probably at Westminster, though Gascoigne says at Lambeth,[1] a definite judgment was passed upon him by the Archbishop before an assembly, not only of bishops and divines, but of laymen also, with two noblemen at their head — Lord Stanley and Lord Scales. The Archbishop addressed him solemnly with an exordium, to the following effect :—

> Dear brother, Master Reginald, since all heretics are blinded by the light of their own understandings, and will not own the perverse obstinacy of their own conclusions, we shall not dispute with you in many words (for we see that you abound more in talk than in reasoning), but briefly show you that you have manifestly presumed to contravene the sayings of the more authentic doctors.

The Archbishop proceeded to state that, according to a certain "Tarentine doctor" who had inquired into the subject, the article of Christ's descent into hell was left out of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds because no heretics had then called it in question. As to the authority of the Catholic Church, St. Augustine said, "Unless the authority of the Church moved me, I should not believe the gospel." He also cited St. Gregory and others upon General Councils to show that they could not err in matters of faith, though they might in matters of fact; and he referred to St. Jerome and Bishop Grosseteste to show that whoever taught an opinion contrary to Holy Scripture must be accounted a heretic. It was necessary now to remove a sickly sheep from the fold, and Pecock was told that he had only the alternative of abjuring his errors, or being delivered after degradation to the secular power as fuel for the fire.[2]

He stood silent for a brief space, and then said:

[1] Whethamstede says at Westminster. See his account of the matter printed by Hearne at the end of Hemingford, vol. ii. p. 493. The meeting a week before was probably at Lambeth, and Gascoigne might easily have made such a slip.

[2] Babington's Introd., xliv. xlv.

"I am in a strait betwixt two, and hesitate in despair as to what I shall choose. If I defend my opinions and positions I shall be burned to death; if I do not I shall be a byeword and reproach. Yet it is better to incur the taunts of the people than to forsake the law of faith, and to depart after death into hell-fire and the place of torment. I choose, therefore, to make an abjuration, and intend for the future so to live that no suspicion shall arise against me all the days of my life." He then made a general confession of his errors and recanted the heresies contained in his books. But this was only a preliminary step, for the meeting, though a large one, was not public. On the 3rd December he solemnly abjured before divines at Lambeth, and on Sunday the 4th before a great concourse of people at Paul's Cross, seven (or at least six) particular errors and heresies which he confessed that he had upheld. They were as follows :— His abjuration.

1. That it is not necessary to salvation to believe that Jesus Christ after death descended into hell;

2. Nor to believe in the Holy Ghost;

3. Nor to believe in the Holy Catholic Church;

4. Nor in the Communion of Saints.

5. That the universal Church may err in the things which are of faith.

6. That it is not necessary to salvation to believe and hold that what a General Council of the whole Church has ordained, approves, or determines in favour of faith and for the health of souls, is to be approved and held by all the faithful of Christ; and that what it reproves and determines or condemns to be contrary to the Catholic faith or to good morals is to be considered by them as reproved and condemned.

And 7 (according to one MS.).—It is lawful for every one to understand Holy Scripture in a literal sense; nor is any one bound by necessity of salvation to adhere to any other sense.

This last article, we are told, is absent from most

copies and seems a little doubtful.[1] Neither is it clear to what statement in his writings it refers, nor how it was made out to be a heresy. But in truth there are other matters in this abjuration which seem a little questionable. How could Pecock, the reader may ask, have confessed it unnecessary to believe in the Holy Ghost? He himself in his *Repressor* not only expresses distinctly his full belief in the Trinity, but particularly affirms in his *Donet* his belief in the Holy Ghost.[2] Pecock, however, apparently held a doctrine which has really a good deal to say for itself —that it is not *de necessitate salutis* to believe in the Holy Ghost. That is to say, that a man might be in the way of salvation, who, like the early Ephesian disciples (Acts xix. 2), had not so much as heard whether there was a Holy Ghost. Even so he might have justified all the first four articles[3] while believing himself in the doctrines therein referred to. But the fifth was certainly dangerous, as implying that *the whole* Church might not have been under the guidance of that Spirit who was to lead her into all truth. And as regards the first he had, perhaps, not quite agreed with the doctrine himself. At all events (what was almost as bad in some people's eyes) he had dared to disagree with "the Subtle Doctor," Scotus, who maintained that the descent into hell must be an article of faith, because the apostles had

[1] See Babington's Introd., p. xlix. *note*; lii. *note*.

[2] *Ibid.*, l. *note*.

[3] Even the Catechism of the Council of Trent (Pars i. cap. x. § 22) points out that there is a material difference in the kind of belief when a man says "I believe in God" (or "*into* God"), as Pecock literally translated from the Latin, and "I believe the Holy Catholic Church" omitting the word "in." —"Tres enim Trinitatis personas, Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum ita credimus *ut in eis fidem nostram collocemus.* Nunc autem, mutatâ dicendi formâ, Sanctam, et non *in* Sanctam Ecclesiam credere profitemur, ut hac etiam diversâ loquendi ratione, Deus omnium effector à creatis rebus distinguatur, præclaraque illa omnia quæ in Ecclesiam collata sunt beneficia Divinæ bonitati accepta referamus." The word *in*, however, seems certainly to be implied in the Latin of the Apostles' Creed, before *Sanctam Ecclesiam Catholicum*, and might even be understood in the Nicene before *unam Sanctam*. Indeed, as a learned friend points out to me, the preposition εἰς is expressly used in the Greek in this place.

put it in the Creed, whereas that article was not in the Creed in the time of St. Augustine; and holding, with Scotus himself, that there was no ground for it merely in Scripture, he considered that the Church could not insist upon it.[1] Nay more, he had made an English version of the Creed without it for popular use.

His recantation, however, was humble enough, and even abject. He acknowledged that he had walked in darkness, and was now brought into the light of truth, and that he submitted himself as a contrite and penitent sinner to the correction of the Church and my Lord of Canterbury. He desired that no man should give faith to his pernicious doctrines, nor read nor keep his books, but bring them to my Lord of Canterbury or his commissaries; and with his own hands he delivered to the executioner, who cast them into the fire, three folios and eleven quartos of his writings. As they blazed up he said aloud, "My pride and my presumption have led me into these troubles and reproaches." Yet if he had gone down to the fire himself it was the opinion of Gascoigne that the people would have thrown him into it after his books.[2]

He burns his own books.

It is all very sad and painful, and the shout of triumph over his fall was anything but becoming. Doggrel Latin verses, punning upon his name, declared that the Peacock had been stripped of his feathers and become an owl, and Abbot Whethamstede wrote about the impious poisoner having been compelled to spew out his venom in public, so that he should never dare to reimbibe it.[3] The Archbishop sent him a prisoner to Canterbury, and afterwards to Maidstone; but he found means to appeal to the Pope, and actually obtained bulls for restitution to his bishopric, which, however, were frustrated by an application to the

[1] Babington's Pref., li. lii. *note*; Gascoigne's *Liber Verit.*, 210.
[2] *Lib. Verit.*, 215, 216. [3] Wheth., *u.s.*, 501.

King. Ultimately, whether compelled to resign or not, he was secluded in the Abbey of Thorney in Cambridgeshire, and a successor was appointed to him in his bishopric.[1] And so ends all that we know of his history.

It may be true, no doubt, that Pecock was a little vainglorious, as his constant references to his own writings seem to show. On the other hand, he could scarcely avoid making such references, having set himself so great a task in which he found no co-operation. The policy of strengthening the Church against heresy by condescending to reason on high matters with the laity in their own vernacular speech was a novel policy which found little favour; and, indeed, as the event showed, it was not without danger to the single-handed combatant. If it could have been adopted as the fruit of consultations among the best divines in England it would have gone far to neutralise the poison of heresy. But argument was so manifestly the business of the schools that the attempt to popularise it in the vernacular for the benefit of the laity was not generally approved of.

Friar Bury's answer to Pecock.

And Pecock's argument, after all, was not so sound as he imagined it to be. A proper answer to it had indeed been composed at the request of Archbishop Bourchier, apparently even before the proceedings taken against him, by an Augustinian friar named John Bury, a treatise entitled by its author *Gladius Salomonis* (the Sword of Solomon), of which, unfortunately, only a first part has been preserved to us, though it contains the promise of a second, which perhaps was actually written. The plan of the whole work is set forth in his Epistle Dedicatory to Archbishop Bourchier, and a slight sketch of Book I. will probably be enough for the reader. The author declares in his Dedicatory Epistle that he does not mean to track out the particular errors of Pecock, but

[1] Babington's *Intr.*, liii.-lvii.

to lay his axe to the root of the whole evil in Pecock's exaltation of human reason above Scripture as a guide in morals. The first book of the work was to show that sound morals came from the womb of Holy Scripture when the fair offspring of reason, while the mother was oppressed by the sleep of ignorance, was found languishing to death. The second would examine piecemeal Pecock's arguments in favour of the drowsy reason, and show their worthlessness, thereby proving that the living child, that is to say, the moral life, which was the subject of their dispute, was born of Scripture. In the first book sentence was to be given by "the Sword of Solomon," that is, the word of God; in the second execution was to follow. But the first book alone remains divided into forty-two chapters, out of which Mr. Babington has given extracts containing all the real matter of the argument.

At the outset Bury proposes to meet Pecock's thirteen conclusions with thirteen opposite conclusions of his own. He maintains that it really is the office of Scripture to found governments, acts, laws, and so forth, even such as the natural reason of man might teach. Scripture was ordained by God for that very purpose, as is shown by an examination of its content. But in science it is not as in the foundation of a house which can only be in the ground it stands on. Morals may be founded in human philosophy though in an imperfect way, but in Scripture the evidences are most certain. Moreover, Bury denies that moral teaching would remain as before if the Scriptures were burnt. He also denies Pecock's assertion that Scripture did not exist before Abraham. The whole of it did not, just as the fulness of day is not till noon. But the first positive law given to man was Scripture, and so Scripture was really as old as Adam. The Old Testament existed before it was written, just as the laws of grammar did before they were reduced to

writing. This, we might remark, is not unlike Pecock's "inward Scripture"; but no doubt the positive law given to Adam would be understood as an audible command. And so the author maintains in opposition to Pecock, that the rule of natural justice is more truly written in the Bible than in the inward book of the soul or of the human heart. Those who, like him, would expound Scripture when any difficulty occurred, so as to make it accord with the judgment of reason, were like those who said of Christ's words at Capernaum, "This is an hard saying. Who can bear it?"[1]

Then with a passing reflection on Pecock's self-sufficient way of referring to his own books for the proof of things that he was discussing, the writer asserts that he has not proved his case in some of them, and having perused his *Donet*—an English work on the subject *de Donato Christianæ Religionis*—he says he is prepared to show that the whole fabric of moral government there set forth as founded in reason has its foundation very particularly in the divine word. Moreover, granting that we may know by the natural reason that there is one God from whom proceeded his creatures of various kinds, and also that we may know what true happiness is by the same guidance, viz. to be joined together in loving and serving God; yet, says Friar Bury, as these very things are taught by the Spirit of God through Holy Scripture in a better and surer fashion than they are in the writings of this or that man endowed merely with natural reason, who that wishes to avoid such presumption as to place himself above God as the authority for human morals, will not humbly yield himself to the teaching of Scripture? Pecock himself, perhaps, has been ungrateful for that teaching on which even he was fed,

[1] In our Bibles the reading is, "Who can hear it?" and so also in the Vulgate *audire*; but the text is quoted here, "Quis potest sustinere eum?"

attributing to his own powers the strength he had gained from the sacred writings. And, indeed, he is inconsistent with himself, for he says in one place that the office of Scripture is to found articles of faith, of which the very first is that God is the creator of heaven and earth—an article which in that case is not founded in the natural reason, but first of all in Scripture.

It is scarcely necessary to pursue the whole of Bury's argument in detail, which in fact I have not done even so far. He has an easy task in answering Pecock's extraordinary remarks about the sacraments, in the course of which he cites Titus iii. 5, and points out that the "works of righteousness which we have done" are those founded on the natural reason and on moral philosophy—those very works of righteousness which Isaiah (lxiv. 6) declared to be filthy rags. But God saved us, according to St. Paul, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Sacraments were instituted that men might be saved by them; no judgments of reason, philosophy, or natural law contributed to that effect. Moreover faith, from which the sacraments derive all their value, requires consent, not inquiry or search, like the human reason, and so is above the judgment of reason; for all consent of the mind which is not sought out, but infused, exceeds every judgment of reason.

Then Pecock had said that the unlearned ought to esteem highly clerks learned in moral philosophy, and accept their guidance to understand Holy Scripture. But our author, on the contrary, declares that the unlearned are bound to thank God that they have been taught the true rules of living, not by natural philosophers or human teaching, but by holy fathers, prophets, and apostles, for all philosophy of men contains human error or the suspicion of error, which is always and everywhere begotten of invincible ignorance; but the secret providence of God has merci-

fully brought out a sure light to the people, not by men of lively wit, but chiefly by chosen vessels hidden till the time came. So the world has accepted not only, as Pecock was wont to prate, some scanty teaching about the Seven Sacraments, but the most beautiful and perfect law of all human life, taught by faithful men without learning, not by human reason, sense, ingenuity, and investigation, faculties which halt, but by illumination from God himself. Pecock's books are more to be avoided than those of Mahomet, Sabellius, Arius, or Wycliffe; their novel doctrines are crafty and plausible, while their author's exalted station deceives the simple-minded; and so forth.

It was really a very able treatise. But however much we agree with it, we may be pardoned for thinking that of Pecock far more interesting, and for sympathising with the author of a most sincere and noble-minded attempt to exhibit a rational basis for belief in the principles, ordinances, and usages of the Christian Church. That churchmen should have taken fright at the methods of such a champion, and refused him even fair play, was by no means a wholesome thing for the future of the Church of England.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION

It was sad that really conscientious men were so bitterly opposed to each other at a time when the Church was greatly in need of purification, not merely from heresy, but from other scandals as well, such as we should naturally regard as far more serious. The worst of it was that heresy paralysed the power of the Church even to amend herself; and when a bishop made a mistake in his mode of warfare, it really tended to encourage existing abuses, for those who profited by them had him at an advantage. Who was George Nevill, Bishop-elect of Exeter, that he should administer a rebuke to such a one as Pecock? A son of Richard, Earl of Salisbury, and brother of that Earl of Warwick known afterwards as "the King-maker," he had been raised to episcopal dignity the year before by Pope Calixtus III., who, as Dr. Gascoigne remarks, "dispensed, or rather dissipated" with him, that he, when only about twenty-three years old, should enjoy all the emoluments of the bishopric of Exeter, retaining at the same time some other benefices that he had already until he should attain the age of twenty-seven and be consecrated. "He was licensed at Rome," says Gascoigne, "to gather the moneys of the bishopric of Exeter, not to gather the souls of that bishopric to God." The Pope had authorised his being called "elect and confirmed Bishop of Exeter" for no higher object,

Bishop Nevill of Exeter.

and thus a poison had entered into the Church of England and an evil example to posterity.[1]

Dr. Gascoigne felt deeply the growing evils and corruptions, but his censures are not generally quite judicial. Calixtus III. was not altogether a model Pope; but he had some fervid good intentions, and if weak in this matter he acted under pressure from a powerful family in England. He had actually given the bishopric of Exeter to another man, when he was induced to revoke what he had done and give it to George Nevill. In short, George Nevill's episcopate was due to the ascendency, at the time, of the House of York, and showed merely that a Church which was theoretically free from State control could be swayed by factions within a kingdom to an extent that would be considered scandalous in a State Church of more recent times. Truly there was much for the devout churchman to complain of in the fifteenth century, and Dr. Gascoigne, no doubt, felt the evils of the time all the more when they had a personal bearing on himself. "It is notorious," he writes, "now in the kingdom of England that boys, young men, and men living in the courts of the worldly, are placed in churches and in great offices and prelacies, others being passed over who have long been occupied in study and preaching, and in the government of the people without worldly gain. For I knew a Chancellor of the University of Oxford" (he means himself) "who by public report was a good ruler and Chancellor of the University, and was twice elected to that office, and resigned it at length against the will of the town and University, and had for twelve years previously ruled there in divinity; and during all that time of his regency and all the time he was Chancellor of the University, no one offered him any church, or prebend, or dignity, or bishopric, nor any ecclesiastical preferment on

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 16.

which he could live as a priest or as a graduate clerk, but he lived all that time on his own small temporal patrimony to which he was born, for he was an only son, after the death of his father. And I knew, at the very time that the said doctor was Chancellor of Oxford, well famed for knowledge and good rule among men, that among others unworthily promoted, a foolish youth,[1] eighteen years of age, was promoted to twelve prebends and a great archdeaconry of one hundred pounds' value, and to a great rectory, and a secular man received the rents of all the said benefices, and spent upon the said youth just as much as he, the secular man, pleased, and never gave an account; and the said youth was son of a simple knight, and like an idiot, almost every day drunk. The bishops promoted him to please a great worldly lord whose playmate he had been in his boyhood; and he remained nearly twenty years in the enjoyment of those prebends and of that archdeaconry, during which time he was never judged capable of being a priest, nor did he ever reside in any of his prebends, nor in the archdeaconry, nor in the rectory, but all things were dispensed (or dissipated) with him from the See of Rome, which was in old times the mother of errors and superstitions, as witnessed by St. Leo the Pope in his sermon on the martyrdom of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul."[2]

Shameful worldly promotions.

Gascoigne declares that he was frequently grieved over all this, believing that many punishments awaited the Church in which such a host of evils prevailed. And if a note of personal complaint sometimes mingled with his deep sense of ecclesiastical abuses, there was really nothing selfish in his querulousness. He was only one example of ill-merited neglect contrasted with many instances of easy-going transgression and luxury. He wrote from

[1] This was Fulk Bermingham, Archdeacon of Oxford.
[2] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 13, 14.

his own knowledge, and could not leave himself out. In another passage[1] he mentions that he did receive a rectory once—the rectory of Dighton in York diocese, probably Kirk Deighton, near Wetherby; but this his "vineyard" he resigned to Dr. Thomas Eborall, who was more competent to go about and preach in York diocese than himself, I presume because he himself was tied to Oxford, being probably then at the beginning of his career. But Eborall was afterwards withdrawn from that cure by Richard Praty, Bishop of Chichester—a good bishop, whose conduct Gascoigne highly commends in another matter which shall be mentioned presently. And so, perhaps, this parish of Dighton was worse off than if he, Gascoigne, had accepted the incumbency. But he is thankful to say that he never desired or received licence from the Pope to hold two incompatible benefices; for why should he accept a plurality, when he saw a number of holy and good priests without even a single benefice? He had been at Windsor once when Henry VI. asked him "Why are not you, Dr. Gascoigne, a bishop?" To which his answer was, "Sir, I tell you, if it were my aim honestly to acquire much money, I would rather be a good shoemaker than the most learned doctor in England, the state of things in England being such as it is in these days."[2]

Gascoigne, in fact, felt the evils of the time so much that he was determined to leave a record of them in writing as a warning to future ages. He made notes under a number of different headings, often repeating the same story nearly in the same words, sometimes with slight additions; and, in accordance with his will, the whole of these scattered memoranda were transcribed into two folio volumes, with the headings in alphabetical order. The work is accordingly called *Gascoigne's Theological Dictionary*.[3]

Gascoyne's *Theological Dictionary*.

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 175-6. [2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 176-7.
[3] See Rogers' Introd. xviii.

From this abundant fountain, therefore, we can draw pretty copious information concerning the growing ecclesiastical abuses of the fifteenth century. The worthy doctor, indeed, was of opinion (and perhaps he was not altogether wrong) that it was precisely these abuses in the Church that brought on disorder and civil war within the realm. It was the neglect of bishops and clergy to do their several duties, he considered, that led to the insurrection of 1450. That they did not reside in their cures, but in the King's palace or in the households of great lords; that they did not keep hospitality; that they did not preach, either by word or example, but were notorious sinners and luxurious and pompous livers; that they did not correct vice except under the influence of bribes and fear of displeasure; that justice was not to be had from lords or judges, and that complaints met with no remedy—these things, together with the plurality of benefices, the appropriation of parish churches and the purchase of livings, were declared to be the principal causes of that rising of a poverty-stricken people against the misrule, cupidity, and injustice that prevailed in high places.[1]

A fruitful source of evils was the appropriation of parish churches. Some nobleman or landed proprietor who had a few livings at his disposal would hand over some church to a large monastery, as an earl handed over to the monks of Jervaux the valuable living of Haghkarth (Aysgarth), worth £100 a year, receiving from the abbey in return lands of their foundation to the value of £40 a year, with the assurance, of course, that masses would be sung for his soul. Even so the monks of St. Mary's at York had the church of Ormyshede[2] appropriated to them in return for the manor of Scotton, and thereupon they ceased to send

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 43, 191.

[2] This would seem to be Ormside, in Westmoreland, but it does not seem to have been in the hands of the monks at York at the dissolution, and it is a rectory at the present day, not a vicarage.

scholars with exhibitions to the university. Thus not only learning decayed, but the souls of parishioners were neglected, for instead of a rector a poor vicar was put in to do duty, while the incumbent appeared perhaps once a year at the end of autumn, or very likely sent a deputy even then, to gather the tithes and sell them that he might himself live in luxury at court.[1]

Again, look at this example :—

> An abbot lately obtained of the Pope several privileges against his bishop in perpetuity, and he pays to every Pope yearly 20 marks, and £20 a year to the King, that the King may not have the temporal rents of the abbey after death of any abbot of that place ; and he, the same abbot, appropriated a great parish church to his abbey, from the goods of which church he pays the said sums yearly to the Pope and King, 20 marks and £20 ; and the care and good rule of that parish church is by that appropriation destroyed. And that abbey is able to spend thousands every year, and they live there like luxurious lords.[2]

Avarice of bishops' officials.

Then bishops' officials in their avarice were endeavouring to get many things prohibited to the people that they might be applied to for indulgences. They got five marks from an esquire whom Gascoigne knew for leave to marry without banns being proclaimed—a fee which apparently they had no right to claim—and ten marks from a widow for leave to vow chastity before any bishop or abbot without being bound to do so before her own diocesan ; and they insisted on having 40 shillings from an anchorite who desired to be translated from a narrow cell into a more spacious one. Worse than these was the practice at York Cathedral, where all the beneficed clergy of the province were enjoined to charge their parishioners confessing to them in Lent to pay somewhat yearly out of their goods to the mother church for the repair of the fabric though it was amply endowed. One poor man who had not threepence altogether was enjoined by his parson to pay forty pence for this object!

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 3, 4, 5, 6, 19. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

Another parson who held his church from the Cathedral and paid five shillings rent for it, actually got forty pence from poor men on this plea, though arbitrary penances like these were quite against principles laid down by Scotus. But though quite recently started, for it only began about 1440, this practice at York seems to have become customary; the livings generally were let to farm and were readily taken, as an incumbent sometimes made as much as 90 shillings a year by these extortions.[1]

Such things were indefensible, but Church law itself had become an instrument of wrong in the hands of worldly men. Offices were secured by great people before they fell vacant, and the functions committed to others, who discharged them well or ill as might be. All true pastoral care and correction of souls was ruined by appeals and inhibitions of the Court of Arches.[2] The Court of Rome itself was corrupt to a most painful degree, and papal concessions and indulgences were procured through the instrumentality of Roman courtesans. Some bishops, no doubt, would make a good fight when they were fully alive to the situation. Dr. Richard Praty, Bishop of Chichester, had excommunicated and deprived of his benefice a vicar of bad character. The immediate result was that the man began a long suit against him in the Court of Arches, and at length, under threat of heavy penalty, required the bishop to absolve him by virtue of a power of absolution granted by Pope Eugenius IV. to any competent priest for every one who was of the paternity of the house of St. Anthony in London. The bishop, however, refused, and would never restore him to his vicarage, even at the request of the Earl of Arundel. The bull, he said, would destroy all episcopal power whatever; the Pope was fallible; and he knew quite well that after the Pope granted a petition with his *Fiat ut*

Church law perverted.

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 2, 10, 11.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

petitur, the papal chamberlains, influenced by bribery, added or diminished clauses in the bull without the Pope's knowledge. "I will not obey that bull, therefore," said the bishop, "for I believe that the Pope did not concede this vocally, and I know that he could not do it really."[1]

Withstanding a papal bull.

The excuses put forward for some prevalent usages met with little sympathy from Gascoigne. Men of the world would plausibly say, "It is better that a church should be appropriated to such a place, because it maintains (*exhibet*, or gives exhibitions to) many persons from the endowments of the church, and many masses are said there for the parishioners of the church appropriated, than that one proud man should have that rectory and live in luxury where he pleases on the goods of that church." His answer was that to multiply abuses was not to put an end to them. The men who used such arguments were the very causes why churches were handed over to the care of unworthy persons and church property wasted by the bad men on whom they bestowed livings. They themselves would confess that if a valuable rectory were bestowed on a worthy and competent man who engaged to reside there, much good would be done among the parishioners, as was only just, and it would also enable the good rector to give exhibitions to young men who might become, some of them, great clerks in schools, and others priests, who by their prayers and masses and preachings and holy example would better please God than all those were likely to do to whom the church was appropriated. Such incumbents received tithes and made proper use of them according to law and to the will of God; but those outside the parish to whom the tithes of the church were appropriated had them by the Pope's licence, and were poor almsmen of the parishioners.[2]

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 32, 33.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 148, 149, 207.

Gascoigne was evidently in sympathy with Chaucer and his "poor parson of a town" (which, of course, meant a village), a learned man who did his duty in his parish, and was content with little. We all know the lines—

> He sette not his benefice to huyre,
> And lefte his schepe encombred in the myre,
> And ran to Londone, unto Seyntè Poulès,
> To seeken him a chaunterie for soulès,
> Or with a brotherhedè be withholdè,
> But dwelt at home and keptè wel his foldè.

The easy duty of singing masses for souls was greatly preferred by hirelings, while country parishes were frequently neglected; and we may well suspect that this abuse, like others, had increased greatly since the days of Chaucer. But there were worthy clergymen still. "I knew one rector," says Gascoigne, "who, out of the revenues of the one only church he had, kept at school and at study twenty young men, and made them priests."[1] Such an example went far within its own limits to counteract prevailing evils. Such examples, however, were rare. Let us hear again what Gascoigne has to say about these matters:—

O Lord God, incline the heart of the Pope, thy vicar, to remedy the evils which occur through the appropriation of churches and by the non-residence of good curates in the same! For now in England a time is drawing near in which it will be said, "Once there were rectors in England, and now there are ruinous churches in which educated men cannot live with decency and afford exhibitions to others." O God, bless Sir Thomas Cumberworth, a knight of Lincoln diocese, who for the love of Thee and the benefit of human souls gave lands and tenements to divers parish churches which were too poor to meet the wants of a curate, so that their parsons might have competent livings. O, how meritorious it would be for the Pope if he would cause the superfluous endowments of several places, even mitred benefices, to be

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 112.

united to devout rulers of souls, and would bind them to due and necessary residence in their cures under a great penalty! For the Lord transferred the Kingdom from the hand, that is, the property, of Saul, and gave it to David, a better man than Saul, as appears in 1 Kings cap. xv.[1] So the Vicar of Christ, the lord Pope, who is the dispenser and minister of the goods of the Church by the authority of Christ, can, to augment the worship of God and the gain of souls, dispose of things given to the use of any church, and deliver them *in commendam* to the prudence of any man, and apply those goods to better and more holy uses, and especially for those acts from which follow the greater health and profit of souls. In divers epistles of the holy Pope Gregory we read that St. Gregory made two bishoprics out of one, and gave lands and rents of one church to the better use of another church, and granted that a good pastor of one church should have to him and his successors the property of another church where there were few persons and where few goods or rents came of the lands. Also, the same holy Pope gave licence to the men of a church to commute their lands and rents for greater usefulness, as appears in the same register of St. Gregory.[2]

It was natural that a man deeply conscious of abuses in the Church should turn his eyes to Rome for a remedy. Rome itself might be full of corruption, but the supreme governing power was there, and nothing could be done without support from the Papacy in the end. Yet in such a great republic as the Church, extending throughout all Christendom, with tribunals in every kingdom, and a last court of appeal at Rome, justice had to fight its way through many tedious delays and intricacies. We have seen how one bishop resisted a papal bull. Here is another case of resistance which, though successful also, led to results not by any means satisfactory :—

One man, very incapable, had the deanery of an English cathedral—the church of Wells—granted to him by papal

[1] That is to say, 1 Samuel xv., the allusion being to verse 28. But the writer seems to have had in mind the expression in a later passage, 1 Kings xi. 12, "De manu filii tui scindam illud."

[2] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 149, 150.

provision, and the King of England, Henry VI., gave him licence to accept the provision granted to him by Pope Eugenius [IV.]; but at the cathedral they resisted him with the strong hand and would not let him enter the church, saying they and the chapter of that church had licence of the Pope of Rome to elect a dean for themselves. So he who had been provided to the deanery of Wells by Pope Eugenius was not admitted, and he then obtained papal bulls and excommunicated all those who had elected another dean and hindered him from obtaining possession. And while they were thus excommunicated and the case was under appeal, this incapable man, rejected by the chapter, by much money given to those about the King, was made Bishop of St. David's in Wales,[1] with the Pope's consent, the King writing to the Pope in his behalf. And a wicked bishop and other graduates of the schools of Oxford in the King's house told the King that it was better and more virtuous to make a bishop of the man provided as dean than to promote the very best and most learned man in England; because thereby, they said, an end would follow of the dispute between the said *provisus* and the elected dean. So they made great evils to avoid a smaller evil.[2]

A scandalous promotion.

A similar thing is recorded to have happened in another case where two bad men competed to be abbot of one monastery. Of these one, who was *quasi laicus*, was elected abbot, and the other was made a bishop in Wales, simply to end the dispute, as the abbey was of royal foundation and a place of burial of kings."[3]

But in how many cases did the abuse of authority defeat law and justice? "I knew a man," says Gascoigne, "who, wishing to be elected Dean of Salisbury, on the day of the election by the authority of the Archbishop, pronounced certain men by name to be then excommunicated and to have been for several

[1] This was John de la Bere, promoted to St. David's by papal bull in 1447. He resigned in 1460.

[2] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 200. The same story is given at p. 130, with the additional details that the man had spent 1400 marks in getting provided to the deanery, and that he himself confessed, to Gascoigne's knowledge, that he hardly knew Latin grammar. He was very worldly, says Gascoigne, and carnal in morals.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

[years?] before pronounced contumacious; and this he did because he knew that those men would not elect him to the deanery, and so by excommunication they would not have a voice in that election."[1]

When high positions in the Church could be secured by such devices, and even scholarship was not indispensable in many promotions, we need not be surprised to learn that degrees were often sold at the universities; and of course lacklearning and evil-living went hand in hand.[2] It had been a project of King Henry V. to reform the University of Oxford by new and more binding statutes, and also to found there a college of divines and masters of arts to which he proposed to annex all the alien priories in the kingdom; but his designs were interrupted by death. Young Henry VI., however, gave effect to that part of his ideas by giving the endowments of those priories to his colleges of Eton by Windsor and St. Nicholas (commonly known as King's College) at Cambridge.[3] Only the University remained unreformed.

Where was a remedy to be found for so many evils? Were there zealous reformers in the Church at that day, impatient alike of corrupt doctrine and corrupt practices, and accordingly stigmatised as heretics? If so, it was unfortunate that those who protested most against the evils of the time were just those who protested most against heretics. Gascoigne's denunciations against them are particularly strong. "Heretics," he distinctly says, "love lust; a heretic who loves chastity is really difficult to find,—not that he forbears commending it with his lips." Their ability is not denied.

"Heretics," we read again, "are sharp-witted and of ardent disposition; for no man can construct a heresy except one who is of ardent mind and has

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 131. [2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 20, 208.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 218, 219.

good gifts of nature, which are created by God's workmanship. Heretics are like the locust, which cannot fly high, although it strives to bound upwards from the ground, and with wings defective and contracted by cold, it falls into a hedge, on footpaths, on twigs, or on confused heaps of stones. So heretics do not fly high, because they do not catch the divine sense, but a human and erroneous one, and they have not warmth of the Sun of righteousness, the charity of the Lord freezing in them ; they sit in thorny seats, because when it freezes and they cannot fly for want of strength, they find their seat and limitation between the thorn-bushes of Aristotle and Chrysippus, founding themselves on the sayings of these philosophers. Hence Eunomius sets forth that 'what is born was not before it was born.' Hence Manicheus, that he might liberate God from the condition of evil things, brings in another author of evil," [1] etc. So Gascoigne agrees, alike with Walden and with Pecock, that heretics are men both of unsound judgment and of impure lives.

The remedy for abuses, then, was hardly in the keeping of these men. Within certain limits honest parsons and honest bishops could do a good deal. But the great machine of Church government whose head was at Rome seemed to defy all possibility of reform. "Rome," says our author once more, "as a special and principal wild beast, has laid waste the vineyard of the Church, her court reserving to themselves the election of bishops, that none may confer an episcopal church on any one unless they first pay the *annates*, or first-fruits and produce of the vacant church. Likewise she has destroyed the vineyard of the Church of God in several places, by annulling the elections of all the bishops in England. Likewise

Corruption of Rome.

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 117, 118. Gascoigne, or his transcribers, occasionally make slips in grammar ; but the meaning of the passage quoted is pretty clear.

she destroys the Church by promoting evil men according as the King and he (the Pope) consent. Herein has she ravaged like a wild beast, that she has annulled all the elections made in cathedral churches, ordaining that all elections of bishops belong to the Apostolic Chamber, that is, to the judgment of the Pope and his cardinals. Also, that Rome does not call any one a bishop except one whom the Pope and cardinals elect as bishop or as archbishop, having previously had paid to them at Rome fruits to the extent of thousands of marks, and also presents to Roman and papal courtesans."[1]

This is not a Protestant indictment of papal abuses, but could anything be stronger? It expresses the bitter regrets of a loyal son of the Church that corruption and wrong-doing prevailed everywhere, even at the chief seat of authority. All over Europe the mischief was felt. The system of indulgences was fully in operation, with all the demoralising effects that might naturally be expected. Men felt themselves at liberty to sin, for "Rome," they said, "was at their gates"; they would not be damned if they had a dispensation.[2] But when, in 1451, indulgences were issued for the past year of jubilee, there arose a more particular scandal. Cardinal de Cusa proclaimed the matter in Hungary. Everybody in that kingdom who gave half the money that he would have spent on a pilgrimage to Rome was to be spiritually benefited. But John Hunniades, the Governor of Hungary, with the nobles of that kingdom, determined that the moneys collected should not go to Rome, but remain in their country, where funds were very much wanted for defence against the invading Turks. Hereupon they were excommunicated by the Pope, with all who had consented to the act. But they made this protest: "We appeal from Pope Nicholas to Christ Jesus, for the defence of

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 13. [2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 118, 123.

whose faith we keep this money against the Emperor of the Turk, who is aiming at the destruction of Christendom." And Pope Nicholas felt compelled to take off the excommunication. The money remained in Hungary, and was of great service five years later, enabling the Christians to win their great victory over the Turks at Belgrade.[1]

One of the abuses at Rome referred to in the above invective was the payment of *annates*, or first-fruits on bishoprics; and as Rome always insisted, or tried hard to insist, on keeping the elections of bishoprics in her own hands, she had very good security for their payment. To bestow a benefice by bargain for a sum of money was simple simony; but it was virtually from simony, with fraud superadded, that the practice took its rise. Listen again to what our doctor says. He seems to have been speaking about early ages before our extract begins:—

> Who then paid *annates* to the Roman pontiff before he was a bishop? Certainly no one. But Pope John XXII. obtained such moneys for the See of Rome to rescue the Land of Promise from the hands of Pagans and Gentiles, and since then these moneys remain to the Pope's Chamber, to be distributed among cardinals and chamberlains of the Pope and his other ministers, who now, as is clearly evident from their acts, make much more account of receiving the money than of having holy fathers appointed in the Church; because, when the money is not forthcoming the papal bulls are denied which are required for a bishop and the confirmation of the election, and every election almost is annulled by [the Pope's] own will—I only wish it were not done without reason. And they have defiled the temple of God, and put it in the hands of those whom they do not trust to keep their apples safely![2]

But the conditions of the Papacy itself kept the Pope in bondage to the abuses of the time. At least this is how Gascoigne understood the matter:—

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 120, 172, 207.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

Popes could not reform things if they would.

From the multiplication of licences and the like concessions, and of appropriations of parish churches and of exemptions grows the profit of the courtezans about the Pope, and of other officers and Romans; and unless the Pope concede such things, and ordain whatever they want him to grant for the increase of their lucre, those about the Pope insult him and stir up enemies to him and labour to have him deposed or poisoned. Another thing there is which is very detrimental to the Pope, namely, the election which he makes of cardinals, who are chosen by him on account of their blood, or because they are rich; and after election to the cardinalate they have licence to retain their former bishoprics *in commendam*, although it was the practice for bishops elected as Roman cardinals *ipso facto* to resign their former bishoprics, and to assist the Pope in consultations and in things to be ordained and reformed. Hence in modern times divers have been cardinals in England and France, and in other countries, who were never at Rome nor with the Pope after being made cardinals, but always remained in their own countries, occupied with their honours rather than with their cures; and they retained their previous bishoprics *in commendam*, and yet never saw the Pope as long as they lived.[1]

In the passage which immediately follows, Gascoigne shows how this was simply a perversion of a method instituted for a good purpose:—

For of old, holy popes, seeing monasteries live luxuriously, possessing far more property than was necessary for their use, withdrew from them much of their wealth, which instead of being needful was rather a hindrance to them by too much anxiety, and gave the goods they did not require to other good men devoted to learning and human needs; for our lord the Pope is steward of the goods committed to the Church, and so can confer them for such uses on those men who can, will, and know how to, spend them best to the praise of God and the health of souls; and this alienation of goods from certain men and conferring them on others is called *commenda* of the goods of the Church, or *collatio in commendam*. And so our lord the Pope alienated the lordship of Bernalwyk from the Abbey of Kirkstall and gave the abbot a licence to alienate it."[2]

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 146.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

Nor are the further remarks here without interest:—

For many religious men in their foundation, besides their spiritual work, laboured with their hands, and lived on that labour and on their foundation, and had small rents and few fields, on which they lived by their own manual labour. For I know a place (*i.e.* a monastery) which from its foundation had lands and fields to the value of £60, and in a few years they bought for money rents to the value of 1000 marks; for goods were given them that, having what was necessary to themselves, they might minister the rest to others, and especially to poor and holy men who are devoted to learning and holy life, and to the increase of knowledge. For those who confer property on religious men and colleges and chantries cannot prevent the things given by them from being at the disposal of the Pope, and subject to his judgment, who ought to judge what seems just before God and dispose of them accordingly. For lately a religious prior, having sixteen churches appropriated to his house, gave a great annual pension to a certain legist who executes the mandates of a bishop in the great office of a court of Christianity; and the same prior gave the same legist the right of presentation to all those churches, on the understanding that he should defend him from all vicars and parish priests who should bring suits against the prior in the bishop's court for those things which he should do in the churches appropriated to his priory. And this wicked legist, against law, gives sentence for the prior; and therefore they seek remedy in the law of the kingdom.[1]

Great hopes had been entertained of a reform of the Church on the election of Nicholas V. as Pope in 1447. Rival parties had each found it impossible to carry their man, and had consented to place in the seat of St. Peter a poor man and a scholar of undoubted virtue. Two years later the anti-Pope Felix V. resigned his feeble pretensions, and the last remains of schism were at an end. In 1450 Pope Nicholas brought crowds of pilgrims to Rome for a jubilee, and in 1452 the Emperor Frederic III. came thither

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 147, 148. Note, "the law of the kingdom" as opposed to the law of the Church—a step from the higher to the lower.

Disappointed expectations.

to him to be crowned. But this Pope, who had begun so hopefully, died after an eight years' reign, depressed by the fall of Constantinople, without having effected any reform either of the Church or of the Roman Curia. On which Gascoigne expresses his sad disappointment, and goes on to remark: "It is believed for truth that if any Pope would destroy those things from which pleasure and abundance of moneys ensue in the Court of Rome, then that Pope will be privily poisoned by those about him or publicly slain, or turned out of his See, as was Pope Eugenius, the predecessor of Nicholas V., by the Prince of Salerno and by the young Cardinal Prosper de Colonna, *nepotulus* of Martin V."[1]

Such was the almost hopeless condition of the Church and its supreme government in the middle of the fifteenth century. Gascoigne's general view of the facts can hardly be mistaken, though occasionally he may be a little credulous. His prevailing impression was that things were getting worse; for he noted the beginnings of some abuses in his own time, and could give positive dates for the more modern ones, as we have already seen in the case of a practice at York which he dated from 1440. Annates, indeed, even if they only began with Pope John XXII., began certainly before Gascoigne's day; and perhaps he was scarcely a competent judge of the acts of Archbishop Arundel, whose famous "constitution" he thought answerable for the general neglect of preaching.[2] For at the date of that constitution he himself was a mere babe. With greater justice he complained, though the abuse, perhaps, was not altogether novel, that since the accession of the reigning King bishops had been so much withdrawn from their dioceses to attend the court. For this had really not been so much the case before, at least in such an office as that of the King's confessor. Henry IV., when his con-

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 157-8.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

fessor was made a bishop, dismissed him to take care of his diocese.[1] Then in the secular world the doctor wishes that ladies would give up the use of trains, which were never worn by pious dames of old; indeed, he understood that the bad fashion had come in since the days of Richard II. and Queen Anne, when such flowing dresses descending to the ground with tails were never worn. A train, he said, was truly so called, "quia trahitur et ad malum trahit."[2] But worse fashions had grown up still later, when women, wearing profuse and costly ornaments, painted their faces and showed uncovered bosoms; while a change in the style of male garments since the year 1429, indecent in itself, was a cause of shameful and notorious profligacy.[3]

Whether Gascoigne's judgment was right about everything is a question which concerns us less than the facts which impressed themselves upon his mind. The year 1457 was a year of great mortality, which he considers to have been a judgment of God upon the prevalent practice of swearing. Men died bleeding at the mouth, at the nostrils, at the eyes, at the nails, joints, and so forth—in short, just as those parts of the body by which it had been their habit horribly to swear; for they would swear by the eyes of Christ, by the face of Christ, by His sides, blood, heart, and by the nails in His hands and feet. This ought to be a warning to many who were provoking the anger of God by placing young sprigs among the people instead of living pillars in churches, and so forth.[4]

Through the whole of Gascoigne's laments one sees clearly the mind of a mediæval churchman. The world was bad enough, but with so corrupt a Church

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 11, 175, 186, 220. Henry IV.'s confessor, here referred to, was Philip Repyngdon, who was made Bishop of Lincoln in 1404. See Wylie's *Henry IV.*, iii. 349.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

the salt had lost its savour; and unless the Church was restored to health, how could the world be? He looked back, as all looked back, to the noble example of Becket struggling with earthly power.[1] He apparently thought Pope Martin V., if he had lived, would have been quite justified in excommunicating Archbishop Chichele and the whole kingdom for not annulling the statutes of Provisors and Præmunire.[2] He seemed quite to undervalue what Chichele's predecessor, Archbishop Arundel, had done to check the preaching of heresy, because it had led, in many places, to a neglect of preaching altogether. In fact, he found that it had given rise to more abuses; for now none but incumbents could preach in parish churches without special licences, which were not obtained without much entreaty by others, and sometimes only for money, while the bishops themselves would neither preach nor send others to do so. For this tying up the Word of God by that constitution, he tells us, Archbishop Arundel met with an awful fate. He died apparently of a choking fit, or some affection of the throat, which would not allow him either to speak or to swallow; and so men believed, says Gascoigne, that God tied his tongue in the hour of need because he had tied the tongues of almost all the preachers, merely to suspend a few heretics from preaching.[3]

That lack of preaching removed one great restraint upon immorality is a fact that will hardly be contested. But energetic action is ever more valuable than energetic preaching, and remedies that seem purely secular may have much more influence on a degenerate age than remedies of a more spiritual kind. In fact, this seems to me the great moral of the period we are approaching. There are symptoms that Henry V., if his life had been prolonged (and if he had not been

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, p. 21. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 17. See pp. 138-9, *hujus operis*.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 34, 61, 180-81.

too much encumbered with the problem of keeping France in subjection), would have shown himself in many ways an energetic reformer. Under his weak though well-intentioned son abuses naturally grew worse. Nor could the civil wars of Lancaster and York be expected to improve matters either in Church or State. It is under the first Tudor that we at length meet with something like the beginning of a moral reformation, and then, indeed, there was much to reform.

Before coming to the new era, however, let us take one last glance at Gascoigne; for we have hardly even yet seen the worst of those bad times:—

A wicked bishop.

In the year of the Lord Jesus 1452 and -3, the rectors, vicars and priests in Wales, having concubines dwelling with them in their houses, said to the Bishop of St. David's, whose name was De la Bere: "My lord Bishop, we priests of your diocese, led by the fear of God and dread of eternal future punishment to sinners, beseech your Fatherhood that by your pontifical authority you will make or compel our concubines to withdraw and be for ever separated from us and from our houses; for we hope and beseech you that they may be so separated from us by your authority that we may never again have occasion to sin with them nor they by us cohabiting with them!" And the Bishop, of abominable memory, replied to them: "I will not grant that your concubines be separated, or forced to separate, from you or your houses; because then I your Bishop shall lose yearly 400 marks which I receive regularly for the concubines of priests; for of every one of several priests I receive yearly a noble [6s. 8d., which is half a mark] or more for his concubine, and that sum thus yearly received to my purse mounts up to 400 marks a year; and therefore I do not wish them separated from you." And the priests said to their bishop, "O lord Bishop, we wish them to be separated from us, and the concubines themselves do not wish to be so, but wish to remain in our houses and feed upon our goods, will we nill we; and therefore, because we dare not expel them for fear of their friends who want them to remain with us, we beg that they may be separated by you, my lord Bishop, from us and our houses." And the Bishop said "No, I will not compel them to separate from

you, for then I, your Bishop, shall lose much money every year." And this is Bishop De la Bere who was wrongly provided to the deanery of Wells by Pope Nicholas V. against the will of the chapter of that church. But he was not received there because he feared to meet with a violent death; and afterwards he was most improperly provided by the same Pope to the bishopric of St. David's in Wales, because the King of England, Henry VI., who was afterwards mentally alienated, licensed him, his Almoner De la Bere, to accept these papal provisions, to the deanery of Wells and to the bishopric of St. David's.[1]

The reader has heard of this bishop and his shameful promotions already from another extract in which he was not mentioned by name.[2] What are we to think of the advancement of such a man at the suit of a weak-minded King whom the Pope many years after his death was urged to make a saint?

The evils of the Church were very lowering and they tried the faith of good men. Was there really no Saviour in the world, none to deliver the Christian nations from this awful mass of corruption? Was there no breath of goodness to clear away these mists of sin and error? Some, perhaps, might look to culture, of which there was not a little. If there was any progress in the age at all it was culture. It is the time of the Revival of Letters and the Renaissance. Learned men are diving into the recesses of monasteries and bringing to the light of day valuable lost classics. Rome is recovering from the sad neglect of her buildings and monuments which had prevailed while the Popes lived at Avignon. Nicholas V. is collecting MSS. and setting up the Vatican Library, enriched, to no small extent, with treasures from the East after the fall of Constantinople. Our own Duke Humphrey of Gloucester has even been before Pope Nicholas in founding that noble library afterwards known by the name of Sir Thomas Bodley;

The Revival of Letters,

[1] Rogers' *Gascoigne*, pp. 35, 36.

[2] See p. 253.

and, as we have seen already, Eton, and King's College, Cambridge, have been established by Henry VI. Caxton, moreover, is coming soon to set up his printing press at Westminster. But the birthplace of the new culture was in Italy, and the intellectual warmth of the movement hardly penetrated into England so soon as it did into other countries. The Universities still held by the barbarous but serviceable Latin which had prevailed for some ages past; and even Dr. Gascoigne, who is zealous for academic requirements, and finds Archbishop Arundel was only a bachelor of arts, writes slipshod and diffuse sentences with the most tedious repetitions, in a style which is utterly unclassical and often ungrammatical as well.

It may be questioned, however, whether the Revival of Letters, when it reached England, did very much for a reformation of morals. The Humanists were not, on the whole, remarkable for moral fervour, and the new impulse had in it very little of a religious character. In truth, it created in many far too much admiration of that ancient Pagan civilisation whose secrets it brought to light. Nor did it do very much to promote even that humanity to which it claimed to be allied; for Caxton's patron, Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, whom he praises as the best scholar in England, was popularly named the Butcher, from the ferocity of his summary executions in the civil war. Strange, indeed, is the record of this great scholar's doings: how he had listened to lectures on Greek at Florence delivered by the Greek refugee John Argyropoulos; how he had moved to tears the literary Pope Pius II. and his cardinals by an eloquent Latin oration; how he had translated works of Cicero into English, and brought home 500 marks' worth of books for the University of Oxford; and then, under Edward IV., having been invested with the powers of Lord High Constable, how he had sentenced victims of civil war, not only to death, but

but not of religion.

to impalement, to the horror of the public generally, who called it Paduan law. He expiated his cruelties by his own fate, having been condemned by a similar tribunal to that over which he had presided. He made a pious end, and it was said of him, as of Addison, that he had taught men how to die.[1]

And what did his friend Caxton say of him? In his Prologue to the Earl's translation of Cicero on Friendship he speaks of him as one "which in his tyme floured in vertue and cunnyng, to whom I knewe none like emonge the lordes of the temporalité in science and moral vertue." And in an Epilogue to "the Orations of Cornelius Scipio and Gayus Flamineus," in the same work, he asks for the gratitude of all readers to the translator of that treatise and the *De Amicitia* :—

I mene the right vertuous and noble Erle, Therle of Wurcestre, which late pytously lost his lyf, whose soule I recommende vnto your special prayers; and also in his tyme made many other vertuous werkys which I have herd of. O good blessyd Lord God! What grete losse was it of that noble, vertuous and wel disposed lord, whan I remembre and aduertyse his lyf, his science and his vertue, methynketh, God not displesyd, ouer grete a losse of suche a man, consydering his estate and connyng, and also thexercise of the same with the grete laboures in gooyng on pylgremage vnto Jherusalem, visytyng there the holy places that oure blessyd Lord Jhesu Criste halowed thith (*sic*) his blessyd presence and shedyng there his precious blood for oure redempcion, and from thens ascended vnto his fader in heuen. And what worship had he at Rome in the presence of our holy fader the Pope, and so in all oder places vnto his deth; at which deth euery man that was there myght lerne to dye and take his deth paciently; wherin I hope and doubte not but that God receyued his soule into his euerlastyng blysse. For, as I am enformed, he ryght aduysedly ordeyned all his thynges, as well for his last will of worldly goodes as for his sowle helthe, and pacyently and holyly, without grudchyng, in

[1] See particulars of his life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, with the references.

charyte, to fore that he departed out of this world, which is gladsom and joyous to here.[1]

There was, indeed, a smooth politeness in society. The refinement of English manners struck even an Italian in England about the year 1500, just as their warmth of salutations did Erasmus. But our Italian was no less struck with their want of domestic feeling, and the looseness of their regard for conjugal ties.

So in the latter half of the fifteenth century the times were not mending, as we may judge very well from the story of Richard III. Feudalism and civil war had at last produced a monster more conspicuous than many. But apart from his murders, think only of the mode of his usurpation! He gets Dr. Shaw to preach a sermon at Paul's Cross, showing that his brother's children are all illegitimate, and apparently that his brother King Edward himself was a bastard, and Clarence also, thus defaming his own mother! Monstrous as these facts appear, it seems futile to question their reality. The illegitimacy of Edward's children, indeed, is the plea for Richard's usurpation given on the Parliament Roll itself; and as for the defaming of his mother, the fact was spoken of even in the days of Henry VIII. as a thing that was quite notorious.[2] Apart from the glaring indecency of the outrage (and, as far as we can judge, his aspersion of his mother was quite unjustifiable), it was surely asking too much of men's belief that, if his mother had been really so frail, he, her youngest son, was the only one not born of an adulterous connection. For this was what Dr. Shaw said for him at Paul's Cross; and unless the purity of his own blood was taken for granted, it is hard to see what was gained by the vile imputation. No doubt a man may say anything if he

Richard III.

[1] Quoted by Blades in *The Life and Typography of William Caxton*, i. 163, 164.

[2] See my *Life of Richard III.*, pp. 80, 81 (ed. 1898).

have troops to keep people quiet; but surely it argues strange cynicism and bluntness of moral feeling that a scandal so gross could be gratuitously ventilated.

Now, when society at large was polluted by so much foulness, and so much talk of foulness, it would have been strange if the Church too had not been very much deteriorated. And we have unquestionable evidence that it was so. But Henry VII., as soon as he had leisure for domestic reform, set about the work with energy, and having made Morton Archbishop of Canterbury, carried reform into the Church as well. In the very first year of his primacy Morton got statutes passed in Convocation to correct clerical irregularities, which, it was to be feared, he said, would in their days be the utter ruin of the Church of England, notwithstanding its old good repute for honest life and staid morals.[1] There was no question whatever that things had been getting continually worse. An archbishop, however, had not supreme authority everywhere even in his own province. There were monasteries exempt from episcopal control, and others which owed allegiance to superiors in foreign countries. Such Orders, for instance, as the Cluniacs, Cistercians, and Premonstratensians were, at least originally, subject to the parent houses in France and Burgundy from which they took their origin, and the claims of those houses, though disputed, had not been effectually set aside. The Premonstratensians in England, we know, were only separated from foreign control in 1512 by a bull of Julius II. confirmed by Henry VIII., when the Abbot of Welbeck was made head of the Order in England,[2] and twenty years later a foreign visitor of the Cistercians was stopped by a royal commission placing the whole Order in England under three of the native abbots.[3] The Cluniac houses, apparently, were for some

Abuses in the Church beginning to be corrected.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 619.

[2] Rymer, xiii. 338.

[3] *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, iv. 978 (6).

time rescued from foreign interference, having been seized by the Crown as "alien priories" during the wars with France; and even in 1458 three monks of Cluny went to England on a fruitless mission for the restoration to the parent house of its ancient superiority.[1] But later on the old foreign jurisdiction seems to have been permitted, as indeed it rested on papal authority, though occasionally one particular house of the Order might, with the King's sanction, procure bulls of exemption from Rome.[2]

It will be seen, therefore, that nothing could be done by the Primate for the reformation of monasteries in England generally without procuring special powers, in the first place, from the Pope. And this Archbishop Morton did, his application to Rome being strongly backed by the King. Pope Innocent VIII., in a brief directed to Morton for this purpose, dated 6th March 1489 (which means 1490 of our reckoning, as it was the sixth year of his pontificate), states that he has been informed that for some time past great laxity of discipline had prevailed in monasteries of the Cluniac, Cistercian, and Premonstratensian Orders, and that dissolute lives were led in some of their houses, even in the Archbishop's city, diocese, and province of Canterbury. Morton is therefore fully commissioned, notwithstanding all past ordinances and privileges, to visit these monasteries, both in heads and members, and bring them back to a true rule of life, punishing those who were criminal and negligent, and cutting off as rotten members those who proved incorrigible.[3]

Armed, therefore, with complete authority to visit all monasteries within his province, the Archbishop addressed a severe letter to the Abbot of St. Alban's, head of the largest and oldest establishment of the

Admonition to the Abbot of St. Alban's.

[1] See a very curious account of their visit in *Registrum J. Whethamstede*, i. 317 (Rolls Series, ed. Riley).

[2] See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, i. 3448, 3944.

[3] Wilkins, iii. 630-32.

old Benedictine Order in England. He told him that by common report he, the Abbot, was said to be guilty of simony, usury, and waste of the goods of the monastery; that by his neglect the services, hospitality, and other duties of the Church had very much fallen off; that many of the monks had abandoned themselves to a dissolute life, and even defiled the churches by unholy intercourse with nuns; that the Abbot himself, among other gross enormities, had admitted as a nun in the neighbouring priory of Pray, which he claimed to be under his jurisdiction, a woman who had left her husband and lived some time in adultery with another man, and that he had afterwards made her prioress, though her husband was still alive; that she was notoriously visited at her nunnery by several of the Abbot's monks, especially by one Thomas Sudbury, so that the place had become really a public brothel; that the Abbot had also placed and changed at his own pleasure the prioresses of Sopwell, another neighbouring nunnery, deposing good and religious women to promote wicked ones; that he had placed brethren in charge of the cells who were not custodians, but thieves; and that he had wasted the property and cut down the woods of his monastery to the value of over 8000 marks. The monks meanwhile neglected divine worship, and had intercourse with harlots, alike within and without the precincts, and they had sold chalices and jewels of the Church to satisfy the Abbot's greed for honours and promotions. They would even cut off and steal the jewels attached to St. Alban's shrine, and the Abbot protected rather than punished them. The Archbishop in his letter says that, even before receiving the papal mandate he had charitably warned the Abbot to reform these enormities; and he now strictly required both him and his fellow-monks, and the prioresses and nuns of Pray and Sopwell also, within thirty, and the keepers of the distant cells of the abbey within sixty days, to reform them effectu-

ally, and to return to the rule of their Order, otherwise the Archbishop must do so himself in a visitation conducted personally or by deputy.[1]

This is a fearful indictment certainly, and we cannot possibly doubt that it is true altogether. But it is quite possible to make more of it than the record justifies us in saying. To regard the case of this great abbey as a sample case, and to presume that other and smaller houses were generally and at all times about as bad, is against all reasonable presumption. I, on the contrary, take it to be an evidence of the effect of disordered times and political revolutions on the state alike of the country and of the Church; and the fact that St. Alban's was a great abbey, exempt from ordinary episcopal jurisdiction, points distinctly, in my opinion, to one very special cause of laxity and bad rule. Yet a prominent historian of the last generation insinuates that the charges afterwards brought against other monasteries by Henry VIII.'s visitors "were precisely of the kind alleged by Morton against the St. Alban's monks," and that "the only ground for rejecting them" is their antecedent improbability.[2] Whether this was "the only ground" we shall consider by and by when we come to discuss the manner of Henry VIII.'s visitation and the character of his visitors. But in reference to this St. Alban's case we may notice here another point, for Froude also informs us in his *History*[3] that "the Abbot was not deposed; he was merely invited to consider his conduct, and, if possible, to amend it."

How did Froude know that the Abbot was not deposed? So far as one can see, he looked at no evidences in the case except Morton's letter; and possibly he misunderstood the meaning of the words allowing the Abbot thirty days, and some of his

[1] Wilkins, iii. 632.
[2] Froude's *Lectures on the Council of Trent*, 23.
[3] Vol. ii. p. 437.

dependents sixty, to amend matters. Morton's proceedings appear to have been simply judicial. He was empowered to call the Abbot before him, and gave him due notice of his intention so to do. His monitory letter is simply a bill of indictment, and a bill of indictment, of course, does not contain a sentence. To know what was done with the Abbot we must turn to other sources; and there is one great work to which any investigator would naturally apply for information. In the latest edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon* we have notices derived from authentic documents of successive abbots in all the different houses. The list of the abbots of St. Alban's, it must be owned, is rather unsatisfactory, even at this very point; but what we do learn about their succession is at least very suggestive. One William Wallingford, we find, was made abbot in 1476, and died in 1484. According to this list he was succeeded by Thomas Ramryge, "whose election, for reasons unknown, did not take place till 1492." So, if we believe the editors of Dugdale, there was no abbot at all for eight years from 1484 to 1492. But it was precisely during these eight years that this abbot ruled or misruled, whom Archbishop Morton so severely censured. Ramryge was not the immediate successor of Wallingford, as the editors of Dugdale believed.[1] There was this abbot between, against whom Archbishop Morton took proceedings in the manner we have seen on the 5th July 1490. And surely it is not a very rash assumption that after some tedious attempts on his part to escape from Morton's jurisdiction by the intricacies of the canon law, he was at length deposed in 1491 or 1492.

We have all the more reason to suppose so when we note how Church and State (as we should call

[1] It is extraordinary that the learned editors of the last great edition of Dugdale should have overlooked so completely the document in Wilkins about Morton's visitation, and thus supposed that the abbacy was vacant for eight years.

them) were working together to correct abuses. Archbishop Morton, whom Henry VII. soon after induced the Pope to make a cardinal, was, as we have seen, a reforming prelate; and Henry VII. was bound, even for his own preservation, to be a reforming king. He had before this time got Innocent VIII. to issue a bull restricting the right of asylum in sanctuaries, and two others excommunicating the supporters of Lambert Simnel and other rebels who were trying to deprive him of his throne.[1] It was clearly for the peace of Christendom that political disturbances, as well as moral corruption in the Church, should be discouraged by the highest possible authority; and Henry was able to press this duty home to the Roman Pontiff.

There was nothing incongruous in the fact that Henry VII., who turned out to be one of the ablest politicians of the age, was a really religious king. Before his accession to the throne he had been familiar with adversity in Wales, Brittany, and France; and it is not men brought up in prosperity and comfort who understand best the hidden power of religion. As a refugee he had been often in danger of betrayal and capture, and he had learned to study men and politics. He was never safe as an exile, and never too safe when he reached the throne. He could only live in comfort by governing on sound principles. And that he was a sincere believer in the Church we have no cause whatever to doubt. One matter which touches our general subject is that when he was at Canterbury in the spring of 1498 a heretic was condemned to the flames, and is said to have been burnt, which, I think, he must actually have been, though an entry in the King's Privy Purse expenses, "To the heretic at Canterbury, 6s. 8d.," might suggest that he was saved. For the entry in the old city *Chronicle* is quite explicit about his death, as well as about

Religious character of Henry VII.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 621, 622, 623.

another thing bearing upon the King's religious character:—

> This yere in the begynnyng of Maii, the Kyng beyng at Canturbury, was brent an heretyk, a prest, which by the Kynges exortacion before his deth was convertyd from his erowys (*sic*) opynyons, and died a Cristen man; whereof his Grace gate grete honour.[1]

The poor man was burnt in the beginning of May. But the King's donation to him, though not distinctly dated, seems to have been between the 20th and the 26th April; for indeed the King had left Canterbury, and was at Sittingbourne on the 26th on his way to Rochester and Dartford, so that he was not present at the unhappy end of the victim. The man is stated to have been a priest, and heresy was a specially bad thing in one who had taken vows to teach the approved doctrines of the Church. His fate must have been already fixed when the King visited him, and the sum of six shillings and eightpence which he bestowed upon him in charity may have been to procure for him some last comforts on his reconciliation to the Church. Bacon says of the incident that "the King had, though he were no good schoolman, the honor to convert a heretic by dispute at Canterbury." Let us say rather, as the record itself says, by "exhortation" than by dispute, for it was not so much a case of theology as the reasonable claims of authority, and the King could only recall him to what he himself felt to be a sense of duty in view of his final end.

We hear comparatively little of heresy under Henry VII.; but the ambassador of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, writes from London the year after this, that a new set of heretics had appeared in England who declared baptism unnecessary for the children of Christians, marriage a superfluous rite, and the sacrament of the altar a fiction. Whether the Canterbury heretic was one of these does not appear;

[1] Kingsford's *Chronicles of London*, p. 222.

perhaps not, as the writer, who dates his letter 13th July 1499, only says at that date, "The prelates have begun to prosecute them (*a perseguitarli*), and it is hoped they will put an end to the heresy."[1]

Foxe has, indeed, been able to collect some cases of heresy both at the beginning and towards the end of Henry VII.'s reign, the true story of which may perhaps be a question to some extent. But even by his pages it appears that there were many recantations and very few burnings. Indeed, I have very little doubt that, owing to Cardinal Morton's measures of reform, not only the state of the monasteries, but the state of the Church in general had been permanently improved, even by the middle of that reign, and neither heresies nor immoralities prevailed unchecked. There was, however, a very distinct revival of heresy in the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign. Deference to the Church was still universal among all who had characters to lose; but it was mainly external deference, and was qualified often by other considerations. In London there were apt to be disputes between the citizens and the clergy about tithes and other offerings, the commercial spirit resenting payments of the nature of Church dues. The rich and well-to-do, on the other hand, could secure indulgences for themselves which were denied to their poorer brethren, or could easily atone for very serious irregularities in a way which did not confer honour on Church courts and the intricacies of the canon law. In cities, moreover, the wealth and splendour of the higher clergy, many of whom, like Wolsey, were known to have come of a humble stock, aroused feelings of envy and dislike, which were all the more prominent when such a one rose high in Court favour and showed a genius for administration which was deficient among the old nobility, the natural leaders of the people.

[1] *Venetian Calendar*, i. No. 799.

Two heretics burned in Smithfield.

In the year 1511, the third of Henry VIII., two heretics were burned in Smithfield on the 18th October. Prosecutions for heresy had been increasing till then, and this was the climax. Two heretics burned in one day at Smithfield were then a rare spectacle; indeed, it may be doubted if there had ever been two in one year before. There was no more sympathy with the victims than with evil-doers who were hanged; and Ammonius, the King's Latin secretary, wrote jestingly to Erasmus that these holocausts — many of which, he suggested, took place daily—accounted for a rise in the price of fuel.[1] But from that day prosecutions for heresy, of which there had just been eleven or twelve yearly in the diocese of London, diminished very considerably; so that in 1512 there was only one, and none afterwards till 1517, when there were two, though in 1518 the number rose again to six.[2] These, however, it must be remembered, were prosecutions only, and none of them led to any burnings.

The rarity of prosecutions for heresy, or at least such as led to any punishment, even of a purely spiritual kind, is further shown by a passage in Sir Thomas More's *Apology*, which was written two-and-twenty years later than the two burnings in Smithfield above alluded to—at a date, indeed, when, as we shall see hereafter, there really had been a perceptible recent increase of heresy due to special causes. A certain anonymous writer[3] of that time, whom More ironically speaks of as "the Pacifier," had published a little book "concerning the division between the spiritualty and temporalty," which really showed that he was anxious to foment that "overmuch blaming of

[1] I may give the passage in Mr. Nichols's translation (*The Epistles of Erasmus*, ii. 40):—"That the price of faggots is gone up I do not wonder; a number of heretics furnish a holocaust every day, and the crop is still growing up. The brother of my servant Thomas, more a stick than a man, is founding, if you please, a sect of his own and has his disciples."

[2] See my *The English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 51.

[3] Christopher St. German.

the clergy" which Pecock had endeavoured to combat so long ago, and which had been very much abated, for the most part, since his day. In chapter thirty-five of that book Sir Thomas discusses an allegation that the clergy have "punished many persons, which much people have judged them to do upon will, and not of love to the people." This he utterly denied, and points out that if it were true that "many" were so punished, they ought to be in almost every diocese. Then let the Pacifier "peruse and rehearse by name all the dioceses in England," says Sir Thomas, "and Wales therewith, and I ween verily that, except London and Lincoln, he shall scant in any one of all the remnant find punished for heresy four persons in five years, and in the more part of them not five in fifteen years, nor delivered into the secular hands in the most part of them any one in twenty years." The diocese of Lincoln, it should be remarked, was the largest in all England, extending from the German Ocean to the Thames, and including the counties of Leicester, Northampton, Oxford, Buckingham, Huntingdon, and most part of Hertfordshire. Yet More says he had not heard of late that there were many punished for heresy in all those counties together. "But about ten years ago, to my remembrance," he adds, "there were in that diocese about twelve or fourteen abjured in one town; and at that time every man that I heard speak thereof, either in the court or elsewhere, appeared very glad that such a bed of snakes was so found out and broken. For there were there at that time no Pacifiers to put forth books and lament such divisions, with laying for the cause of the grudge that many persons were mishandled and punished for only speaking against the misorder and abusions of the clergy."[1]

Rarity of prosecutions for heresy.

Real heretics, in fact, were few, until it was known, as it had become known for a year or two before Sir

[1] More's *Works*, p. 900.

Thomas More wrote this treatise, that heretics were not really objectionable to the Court, because when King Henry was prosecuting his great object of a divorce from Katharine of Aragon, and was preparing for a breach with Rome if he could not get it otherwise, he felt it was not bad policy to give as much trouble to the clergy as possible, and stir up complaints against them that they had been vexatious and unjust to those who were accused before their tribunals. But of these things I shall speak hereafter. We are at present only at the beginning of the King's reign when he was highly popular, a great upholder of the Church, and led into a war with France by his devotion to the Holy See. The thought of encouraging heresy certainly never entered his mind at this time, nor even many years afterwards when he earned the title of "Defender of the Faith" by writing against Luther. He was, indeed, a very just prince where his own interests were not concerned, and his sentiments about heresy were the sentiments of good men generally.

It so happened, however, that though heresy certainly declined in London after 1511, a special case excited much attention in 1514, and at the same time a very serious question came up about the privileges of the clergy. I do not propose to speak of either of these matters in detail, having already done so elsewhere. But I must briefly relate the circumstances, as both incidents are full of significance as to the state of the Church twenty years before papal jurisdiction received its death-blow.

Hunne's case.

Richard Hunne, a merchant tailor of London, was arrested for heresy and committed to the Lollards' tower in St. Paul's Cathedral. He had resisted a claim by the parson of his parish for what was called a mortuary on the burial of a child,—a claim the cognisance of which belonged to a spiritual court. To defeat it, however, he sued the priest in a

præmunire as if the matter concerned the King's prerogative and the law of the land. He failed in his suit, as the King's courts acknowledged that it was a matter of spiritual jurisdiction; and having to meet the charge of heresy on which he had been arrested, he hung himself in the Lollards' tower. When his death became known a murmur got abroad that it had not been due to suicide, but to foul play; and the inquest summoned were so bitterly hostile to the clergy that they found a verdict of wilful murder against Dr. Horsey, the Bishop's Chancellor, a sumner, and a bell-ringer. The sumner seems to have been coerced in prison to accuse himself and the others, and the agitation was extreme. The Bishop of London (Richard FitzJames) appealed to Wolsey to intercede with the King to have the matter fully and impartially investigated, as the prejudices of a London jury would make them condemn any clergyman, however innocent. The King, accordingly, had a full investigation made; at the end of which the Attorney-General confessed the plea of not guilty to be true as put forward by the accused.

The case about the privileges of the clergy was this. From the very accession of the House of Tudor these had been subjected gradually to more and more limitations. In the very last year of Richard III.'s short reign Innocent VIII. had addressed a brief to that King,[1] commending the care he had taken for the increase of divine worship in England, and his desire to see completed a work lately begun in the Cathedral of York. But the Pope appealed to His Majesty to put a stop to one abuse which prevailed far too much in violation of ancient order, which was the practice of bringing priests before mere secular tribunals. The Church

[1] Wilkins (iii. 617) says to Henry VII., but the date shows clearly that the King to whom it was addressed could only have been Richard III.

always required free and untrammelled jurisdiction, above all things over her own ministers, in any Christian State. That was a perfectly well understood theory everywhere, whatever limitations the mere progress of the world was imperatively demanding to be put upon it. But whatever limitations progress required, it was very desirable at first, indeed very necessary, for a really politic king to act on a clear understanding with the See of Rome, even to prevent confusion. So when a new policy began under the House of Tudor, Henry VII., as we have partly seen already, not merely took counsel with Rome, but obtained authority from the Pope himself for some very necessary reforms, both among the clergy and in the kingdom generally. At his request, in 1487, Innocent VIII. had issued a bull granting certain limitations to the right of sanctuary allowed to malefactors.[1] Two years later an Act was passed (4 Hen. VII. c. 13) limiting, without the Pope's leave, the peculiar privilege called "benefit of clergy," which by the liberality of usage had come to be extended not only to all who had taken orders of any kind in the Church, including door-keepers and minor church officers, but even to all those who showed themselves able to read. If a man were convicted of any offence, even murder, he could claim his "clergy," and if he could read what was called a "neck-verse" in a book presented to him, he was handed over to the custody of the bishop to be proceeded against by canon law, and was no longer amenable to the ordinary law of the land. By this statute, however, such criminals, when not actually in orders, if once convicted for a felony, were branded on the thumb, murderers with a letter M, and thieves with the letter T, so that they should not claim the privilege a second time. This very slight qualification of the old "benefit of clergy" was assuredly a

Right of sanctuary limited.

[1] Wilkins, iii. 621.

step in the right direction; for, as the preamble of the Act declared, "upon trust of privilege of the Church divers persons lettered had been the more bold to commit murder, rape, robbery, theft, and all other mischievous deeds, because they had been continually admitted to the benefit of the clergy as oft as they did offend in any of the premises." Even so the Act was most tender to the jurisdiction of the Church; and if any one, on a second conviction, claimed to be in orders, without having letters at hand to prove it, the justice before whom he was tried was to give him time to procure a proper certificate. "But," as Bacon remarks, "for this good Act's sake the King himself was after branded by Perkin's proclamation for an execrable breaker of the rites of Holy Church."[1]

A further advance was made in the fourth year of Henry VIII., when a temporary Act[2] was passed, depriving of this "benefit of clergy" all persons guilty of murder or robbery in churches, highways, or houses, unless they were actually in holy orders. It is strange that this Act seems to have met with more criticism than the last; for apparently there was serious need for it, especially as evil-doers had found means to defeat justice, not merely by claiming the clerical privilege, but by raising "foreign pleas" triable in other counties, where by corrupt means they procured unjust acquittals. Still it was considered an invasion of the Church's proper jurisdiction, which was held to be beyond the power of Parliament. Possibly the bishops were absent in their dioceses in the November session of 1512 when it passed, and the Act was only to endure till the next Parliament. The question accordingly came up again in that Parliament which met in November

[1] Spedding's *Bacon*, vi. 87. See the text of Perkin's proclamation given in the Appendix, p. 254.

[2] St. 4 Hen. VIII. c. 2.

1515, and most serious controversies arose about the expiring Act. The Abbot of Winchcombe had already denounced it in a sermon at Paul's Cross as being actually contrary to the law of God, declaring that all who had been accessary to its passing had incurred ecclesiastical censures. The King called a council at Blackfriars to consider the matter, and there, alone among the clergy, Dr. Henry Standish, Warden of the Greyfriars of London, maintained that the Act was no invasion of the Church's privileges. The temporal lords, after hearing both sides, desired certain bishops to cause the Abbot openly to retract what he had said. But the bishops refused, saying that they were bound by the law of the Church to maintain the Abbot's opinion; and they even called Dr. Standish before Convocation to answer for his heretical opinions. The excitement caused at that time by Hunne's death made this dispute between spiritual and temporal authority unusually acute, especially as the bishops were anxious to shield their officers from imputations which they rightly believed to be the mere effects of popular prejudice. So the bishops had a double battle to fight; but while they succeeded in protecting their officers from unjust punishment, their high theory still brought them into collision with the principles of civil government. For the question was simply about the complete exemption of Church officers from civil jurisdiction, and in Convocation Standish was, as he confessed, but "one poor friar against all the bishops and clergy." To avoid answering the articles against him he appealed to the King, and the clergy were thrown on their defence for trying to make him accountable for advice that he had given his Sovereign. This charge they repudiated, and they implored the King to remember how he had pledged himself to respect their liberties by his coronation oath. The judges, however, considered that all who

Council called touching Church privileges.

had taken part against Dr. Standish had incurred a *præmunire*; and the clergy came before the King at Baynard's Castle, where Wolsey, just made Cardinal, knelt before him to intercede for them. Wolsey confessed that he owed his advancement entirely to the King, and said he was very far from seeking to impair the royal authority; but Standish had attempted to justify the conventing of clerks before lay judges, and the clergy were bound by their oaths to defend the liberties of the Church. Chief-Justice Fyneux, however, said that the conventing of clerks had been practised by many holy kings, and been agreed to by many Fathers of the Church, and the King refused to admit the interpretation put upon their liberties by the clergy.[1]

Wolsey himself, even while interceding for the clergy in this matter with the King, had prayed the King to allow it to be referred to the Pope and his councillors at Rome. As a politician he, of course, knew perfectly well that such a request would be inadmissible, but as an archbishop he felt bound to prefer it. And not one of the clergy themselves, probably, was in the least surprised at the words in which the King is reported to have announced his final decision, which was as follows :—

Henry VIII.'s decision.

"We are, by the sufferance of God, King of England; and the Kings of England in times past never had any superior but God. Know, therefore, that we will maintain the rights of the Crown in this matter like our progenitors. And as to your decrees, we are satisfied that even you of the spiritualty act expressly against the words of several of them, as has been well shown you by some of our spiritual counsel. You interpret your decrees at your pleasure; but, as for me, I will never consent

[1] The whole story will be found in Keilwey's *Reports*, p. 180, supplemented by the information in another document in *Letters and Papers, Hen. VIII.*, vol. ii. Nos. 1313, 1314.

to your desire any more than my progenitors have done."

Royal supremacy was really no new thing, and the papal theory of a universal monarchy to decide principles of faith, conduct, and government had never been fully admitted in practice. Henry VIII. at this time only used the language that any king would have used in his place; but even he never contemplated in doing so the idea of carrying royal supremacy to the length he did some years afterwards.

BOOK II

ROYAL SUPREMACY

CHAPTER I

FORCES AT WORK IN THE REFORMATION BEFORE QUEEN ELIZABETH

We have now seen what Lollardy was before the Reformation. It remains for us to see what it was in the Reformation era itself, and to consider its bearings on the greatest religious movement which has ever affected the world since Christianity was first emancipated from pagan persecution.

In this investigation I think I may as well say at the outset that I do not regard the Reformation itself as a development of Lollardy. On the contrary, I consider that Lollardy, though no longer called by that name, remained the great adversary of the Reformed, as it had been of the pre-Reformation Church—certainly as great an adversary of order, though as regards doctrine it undoubtedly compelled reconsideration by a national Church of some questions with a view, not so much to stricter definitions, as to greater breadth and comprehension. For if there is one thing more than another which is valuable in the Reformation—one thing for which we have to thank, not the vehemence of man, but the work of the Holy Spirit—it is surely that the Reformation preserved so carefully all the vital truths of Christianity while allowing so large a liberty of private judgment on points really open to debate. Matters of doctrine, indeed, were not the first things called in question—it was the system of the Church as an undivided

The Reformation not a development of Lollardy.

whole. And that system had, as a matter of fact, broken down when its old friends endeavoured to mend it by a set of abstract resolutions passed by divines at Trent. They made it more efficient, indeed, but at a sad cost to comprehensiveness.

Cut off from papal jurisdiction, the Church of England undoubtedly preserved a very broad basis. That a factitious body of orthodoxy had grown up in the Middle Ages under the limitations of mental diet inevitable in days before men learned to pierce the great mysteries of the natural world, is a thought which seems forced upon the mind by many and various considerations. The scantiness of other fields of intellectual activity had led the Schoolmen to cover the whole realm of abstract and religious thought with somewhat barren speculations, and often with mere fantastic discussions. With even too subtle logic they had piled up one proposition upon another, until the things of faith had been defined with a philosophical precision which very naturally tended to make them more obscure to the unlearned laity. The one really good thing in Lollardy, encumbered as it was with much that was unruly and irreverent, was that it expressed positive need for a popular religion in which real faith was not lost in a multitude of mere ceremonies and usages, but rested on an intelligible basis. By such literature as *The Creed of Piers Plowman* we can see how pious acts had degenerated into means of raising endowments for rival orders of friars, and by Chaucer how masses had become an easy duty for indolent and luxurious priests, while an ignorant laity sought for something more vital. And what had the logic of the schools done meanwhile to feed the people? From the words of our Lord Himself it had developed the mysterious doctrine of transubstantiation, which even a Schoolman of Wycliffe's great ability did not find intelligible, and the Church forbade it to be called in question. This logic had

Scholastic religion.

mapped out the habitations of souls beyond the grave into the three separate regions of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, and had taught that prayers and offerings for the dead might affect their state of happiness. Then grew up the theory of indulgences for sin, and the authorised sale of such indulgences, against which Luther protested. But in England the corruptions of the Church were somewhat less obtrusive than in Germany, and it was not from any protest against real abuses that the Reformation here took its origin. The ground, however, was prepared for a good deal of theological change if heresy, instead of being suppressed, were once encouraged by authority.

And this it was which actually took place. In the sixteenth century the world was already becoming too strong for Rome, as it has been ever since. Secular princes were, no doubt, civil enough towards the Papacy, and had no idea of allowing an irresponsible friar like Luther to attack it with impunity. The kings of the world might very well keep on good terms with Rome, as Rome had not the slightest desire to diminish their power, but rather to increase it. But secular princes were civil only because they felt it was their interest to be so. As to the dual jurisdiction of Church and State within their own dominions they were not very much troubled. The judges in every land recognised spiritual jurisdiction as a distinct sphere of action, and if a question came up as to the precise limits between the spiritual and the secular, kings, as we have seen, had the matter in their own hands, and could determine according to their own consciences, or to their own sense of convenience, what was due to each. As to the allegiance of their subjects they were tolerably secure, for their subjects were not less bound to them than to the Pope, and, if the prince were leading them wrong, would generally leave the responsibility to him.

Secular Powers and the Church of Rome.

Under ordinary circumstances, therefore, Henry

Henry VIII.'s original devotion to the Holy See.

VIII. had no sort of motive for quarrelling with the Holy See; and being a king who loved theology as well as self-glorification, he wrote a book in answer to Luther, which naturally, coming from so great a sovereign, received grateful recognition from Rome. Leo X. conferred upon its author the title of *Fidei Defensor*. But not many years elapsed before his fatal passion for Anne Boleyn had drawn him into a course of action which, though he did not perceive it at the time, could only lead, if persisted in, to an absolute defiance of the judgment of the Holy See; and how he could maintain such an attitude in the face of all Europe, self-willed as he was and tenacious of his purpose beyond the great majority of despots, was a problem far more difficult than we are apt to imagine. For us in a later age papal authority has lost its power. No one, even in Roman Catholic countries, is compelled to yield it deference against his will. The theory of a united Christendom, whose decrees, registered by a supreme tribunal at Rome, are of universal obligation, has no longer any counterpart in the world of actual fact. But even for a despotic sovereign in the sixteenth century to flout the decisions of the Roman Curia in a case in which he had himself appealed to papal authority, was a thing absolutely unparalleled and a menace to the moral order of Europe. No good man loved the sight; and if other princes still courted his alliance, it was not out of any kind of regard or good feeling towards him. It was simply from the feeling that he was too powerful a prince to offend, as he could at any time use the forces of England in aid of an antagonist.

Yet it must be said that the deference paid to Rome in matters spiritual was not generally accompanied by sincere respect on the part of any prince whatever. Francis I. could ally himself with the Lutherans, or even with the Turk to fight his battles.

Charles V. could let his forces commit gross enormities in Rome and take the Pope prisoner, merely to give his Holiness a lesson. As princes of this world the Popes had their full share of worldliness, and did not count for much in the conflict of political ambitions. It would have been otherwise, no doubt, if the Church, as a sacred society, could have been miraculously preserved from the effects of human weakness. If Popes, even as a rule, had been pure, dispassionate, and unworldly, the kings of the earth might have bowed to them, not in mere courtesy as they did, but with genuine respect and veneration. Popes would then, indeed, have wielded "the two swords" to which mediæval philosophers thought them entitled—the supreme power in spiritual and temporal causes alike; for in truth these two domains do not lie so far apart from each other when you put matters to a practical test. But instead of a spiritual power rebuking sin and wickedness in high places, men saw at Rome, at the close of the Middle Ages, a mass of flagrant abuses. Nepotism and simony were but commonplace matters; and Popes whose lives were anything but examples of Christian morality engaged in unjust wars, offered to share with secular princes the proceeds of indulgences and crusade moneys, and seemed really to be, among worldly sovereigns, sometimes the most warlike and ambitious, sometimes the most temporising, at all times the most secular-minded.

It is true there was another aspect of the Papacy to which Protestants hardly render justice. Whatever may be said of the private morals of individual Popes, it must be considered that they wielded judicial functions and passed sentence, when required, as to what was right or wrong in faith or practice. Nor does it appear that they and the Sacred College, by whose advice they were guided, ever came to corrupt decisions or judgments which were otherwise

than just and impartial on the cases laid before them. But even here there was at times very considerable appearance of abuse. For in matters matrimonial, at all events, the cases laid before them could often be carefully dressed up, and the weaker party—almost always, of course, the wife—could be somehow got to surrender her right or forego the prosecution of her claims. For a manifestly political reason (though there were better grounds advanced in court, the legality of which seems to have been very carefully weighed) Louis XII. of France sought release from an uncomfortable union, and, obtaining it, was able to unite the dukedom of Brittany to the French Crown by marrying the Duchess Anne. And there were, besides other royal examples of the like character, cases like that of Henry VIII.'s brother-in-law, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who, when Henry himself first sought a divorce, had been married and unmarried and then married again in some very curious fashion, and found a papal confirmation of his second marriage necessary to defeat the claims of his first wife.[1]

His great divorce suit.

No wonder, then, that Henry VIII. himself was encouraged to think that he could procure from Rome a divorce from Katharine of Aragon. And it is quite possible that he might have obtained it if Katharine had been as willing as some other princesses to forego her own rights as a married woman for the sake of peace and quiet. But questions between two, if one party would not give way, had to be judicially determined, and the Holy See, as we have just remarked, was never so corrupt as to pass untrue decisions for mere political reasons. The statement so often made that Clement VII. refused to gratify Henry in this matter merely from fear of the Emperor Charles V. is not really warranted by facts. The decision of the case rested with the Roman Curia, and did not in any way

[1] See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. iv. No. 5859.

depend on the Pope's own personal convenience. Clement himself, no doubt, pleaded his very real fear of the Emperor as a reason for not granting too hastily special favours to the King of England, whom he had every desire to gratify; but these favours fell very far short of the judicial sentence required for Henry's purpose. The validity or invalidity of his marriage could only be determined according to the canon law.

It is not pleasant to relate the details of such a story; but there is a tendency, not on one side only, to evade the significance of facts which ought to be looked in the face. This great matrimonial cause was undoubtedly that which brought about the separation of England from the See of Rome; and though the Court of Rome did nothing in the case but what was strictly just, the case itself with its long and inevitable delays was a most painful example of the saying, *Summum jus summa injuria.* What consolation was it to the injured Queen Katharine that after her cause had been six years before the world she obtained a sentence from Rome at last? By that time the King had renounced the authority to whose decision he had at first appealed and was determined to defy it, while, having shut up Katharine for the rest of her days in what was virtually a prison in a lonely country, he had married Anne Boleyn without waiting for the sentence. If the decision could have been settled by the will of Henry's subjects, quick justice would have been done, and Anne would have been hissed off the stage. Even the Legate Campeggio, when he came to try the cause in 1528, was met by the most manifest tokens of popular disapproval; for it seemed as if the case had been already prejudged against the unfortunate Queen when, at Henry's solicitation, a cardinal had been sent from Rome to sit as judge along with Wolsey.

The King had been at first persuaded that his claim for a divorce was legally a good one. And in truth there were plausible reasons for thinking so, if it had only been a question about marrying a brother's widow, and whether the Pope could or could not dispense in such a case. But to ask the Pope to annul the act of one of his predecessors, to the scandal of all Christendom, in a case so very conspicuous, after the marriage had been held valid for over twenty years, was quite a different matter. Other royal marriages, too, might be affected, and one reigning sovereign, John III. of Portugal, whose mother had been the second wife of King Emmanuel, married by papal dispensation as she was the sister of his first wife, must have been held illegitimate if Henry's plea was valid. Dispensations for affinity, indeed, were comparatively new things, and a very tender point was touched in the papal government of the Church when questions could be raised about their legitimacy. For if a dispensation had been obtained where the Pope had no power to dispense, it might be argued as a matter of high principle that the ensuing marriage was invalid from the first, no matter how many years it had held good.

So from a mere legal point of view it looked as if the King had really a good case. Indeed, there seems no doubt that Archbishop Warham had originally opposed the marriage on the ground that it was canonically unjustifiable, and that he was even inveigled into a preliminary inquiry into its validity in 1527 when the King's "scruples" were first intimated to some of his confidential advisers. But Warham was a mere legalist who would not look at the larger issue; and the King, though generally appreciative of politic and practical considerations, was in this case blinded by his passion for Anne Boleyn. He had quite expected that a trial before two papal legates (though one of them was his own creature)

would have led to an authoritative decision in his favour; and when he saw that he was mistaken and that the cause, being revoked to Rome, was pretty certain to be decided otherwise, he for a short time thought that he must give up the pursuit of his object altogether.[1] It was a great relief to most of his councillors to believe that he had abandoned it. But he did not remain long in that state of mind; for Cranmer's suggestion[2] of getting opinions from universities gave great encouragement to his old obstinacy. It put the matter, in fact, in altogether a new light; for, unique as Henry's case might be for the invalidity of his marriage, he had not as yet gone so far as to question the Pope's dispensing power entirely. He had only sought to prove that the dispensation actually granted for his marriage was insufficient for its purpose. He, in fact, had sought to obtain from the Pope, on the supposition that he was really a bachelor, a dispensation for his marriage with Anne Boleyn,—a marriage to which there was every whit as great objection, from a canonical point of view, as to his marriage with Katharine, the obstacle being in this case illicit intercourse with Anne's eldest sister. But now he must get opinions from universities (which would serve at least to release him from Katharine) that it was beyond the Pope's power altogether to dispense for such a marriage. For the next step—that of marrying Anne Boleyn—no opinions but his own would trouble him.

Almost abandoned, but revived by Cranmer's suggestion.

Opinions of universities could be obtained by a powerful sovereign like himself with comparative ease. In his own kingdom Oxford and Cambridge could be

The appeal to universities

[1] See Pole's letter to Charles V. (Apologia ad Cæsarem), § xxvi. in *Poli Epistolæ*, i. 116.

[2] Pole says it was Cromwell who encouraged the King to persevere by insisting, in the last resort, on his own supremacy over the Church; but Cranmer's suggestion came first. See *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, xiii. 77.

gained by a little manœuvring. French universities, too, could be managed by the like arts with the friendly offices of Francis I., who for political reasons desired Henry's eternal friendship as a support against the Emperor. In Italy, also, a good deal could be done—even more than in England, for the universities there were simply great schools of legal right, and could easily give satisfaction on any such question proposed to them in the abstract. The Venetians, too, desired to oblige England as far as they honourably could, and the libraries of Venice were searched for authorities in the King's favour. They were by no means so ready, indeed, to authorise the discussion of the question by their own University of Padua—in fact they strictly forbade it, as the discussion itself was derogatory to the Holy See, besides being injurious to a great princess nearly related to the Emperor. Nevertheless an opinion was secured for the King under the seal of that university. Nay, even that of Bologna, though situated in papal territory, when applied to on the subject, not only declared that the Pope could not dispense for a marriage with a deceased brother's wife, and that it was a union to be utterly abhorred by Christian men, but refused any gift or fee for the opinion. Numerous opinions, however, of individual learned men—sometimes even of Jews about the application of the Mosaic law—were bought by the King's agents to add weight to the mass of authorities. And so, having compassed sea and land, and spent money profusely on his great object, the King advanced boldly. The opinions of the universities were read in the House of Commons to justify the King's separation from his wife. He then suddenly parted company with her and caused her to be removed, first to one and then to another house in secluded parts of the country; and he never saw her more.

But even yet he did not marry Anne Boleyn at

once in defiance of that papal authority before which the cause was still pending. He was too wary for that. He meant to fulfil his promise and make her his wife, but a good deal else had to be done before he could feel any security in doing so. And he had begun already first to muzzle the Church in his own realm lest it should speak out plainly. As early as the autumn of 1529, when Parliament met just after Wolsey's fall, he had evidently formed plans for harassing the clergy, which his subservient Parliament was not slow to put into the form of statute laws. The design was so obviously due to a spirit of enmity to the Church that Bishop Fisher complained of it in the House of Lords, warning them by the example of Bohemia how a kingdom might be ruined as the result of lack of faith. His words were reported in the Commons, and the Speaker was inspired to complain of them to the King, saying that it was an insult to them, the chosen representatives of counties and boroughs, and dishonourable to the King and realm, that their enactments should be treated as if made by Turks or infidels. This was only a round-about way in which the King took his revenge upon Fisher for having honestly declared his mind on the divorce question when the King himself had actually asked for advice on the matter at the trial before the legates.

The modern reader, I am well aware, will have some difficulty in realising that the main work of this "Reformation Parliament," as it has been called, could have been entirely dictated by the King himself. Subserviency to this extent is not what we look for in an English House of Commons. Perhaps the historical student, however, may have greater difficulty in realising the subserviency of the House of Lords in an age when the Commons were only a growing power. But the independence of the Lords had been lost, almost from the accession of the House of Tudor.

Subserviency of Parliament.

The Lords were dangerous to Henry VII., and he managed to rein them in. They slightly recovered power at the accession of Henry VIII., but were soon eclipsed in Council by the splendid abilities of Wolsey, and afterwards were daunted by the execution of the Duke of Buckingham. As for the Commons, their subservience in this "Reformation Parliament" may be shown by many tokens; among others by the following document, which looks as if it had been drawn up at the beginning of this very Parliament:—

"Articles condescended and agreed by the King's Highness and the noblemen of this his realm of England, being assembled in this present Parliament begun in the third day of November in the xxjth year of his most noble reign, to be ingrossed in due form and to be enacted by authority of the same Parliament in the next full Court thereof after the prorogation of the same hereafter to be had."[1]

Below this heading is the King's signature (copied, it is true, for we have not the original), and then follow the articles, which are simply a programme of land legislation agreed upon between the King and the Peers, and signed by almost the whole nobility, as well as the King, seemingly on the very first day of the session, with a view to their being enacted afterwards as laws with the consent of the Commons. As to the date, however, I am not quite clear, for the expression "in this present Parliament *begun* in the third day of November," may not necessarily imply that that was the day the document was drawn up. Every particular Parliament was referred to by the date at which it began, and as this Parliament lasted seven years (Henry VIII.'s Long Parliament it is sometimes called) the document itself may be later. Only it was certainly not later than March 1532, and

[1] MS. Cott., Titus B., iv. 114. The document unfortunately is only preserved in a seventeenth-century copy, but its authenticity has never been impugned.

may have been very well in the earlier half of that month, for reasons which I shall presently show; and, moreover, it appears that, though these enactments had been agreed to between the King and the Lords, the Commons actually refused their assent to them in that "full court" for which they were prepared. So, in fact, the Commons were not so subservient in this particular matter as they were expected to be.

But the Parliament of 1529 was undoubtedly a Parliament of the King's nominees, and the work it did was done mainly to gratify the King. In that single session, besides the Acts above referred to against the clergy, which aimed at abridging their liberties, cutting down their fees, and destroying the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, there was one statute passed of a very secular nature indeed. It relieved the King from repaying a forced loan which had been submitted to a very few years before with extreme reluctance. The Houses did not meet again till the beginning of 1531, when the policy of harassing the clergy took altogether a new form. They had already received intimation that they were under a *præmunire* —the whole body of them—for no other offence than having recognised the legatine authority of Cardinal Wolsey. This was a strange intimation, seeing that the King had recognised that authority himself so long as it suited his purpose. But there was no redress. The clergy had no appeal against the civil power, and it was clear that they must buy their pardon at the cost of a very heavy fine. In the Convocation of Canterbury they had proposed to vote £40,000 as a subsidy, but were compelled to raise it to £100,000 to make their peace with the King. This was so oppressive that it was granted with great reluctance; yet when granted they were told that it must be accompanied with the recognition of their Sovereign as "Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church." This new demand was debated by

Hard struggle of Convocation with the King.

the Upper House for three whole days, and messages from the King did nothing to hasten a decision. He then allowed them to modify it by inserting the words "post Deum" after "Supremum Caput." Even so, however, the grant was resisted, and Archbishop Warham proposed instead a form recognising the King as Supreme Head of the Church—"quantum per Christi legem licet"—as far as the law of Christ would allow. This was evidently as much as the clergy could be expected to concede, and even this proposal was not seconded. But as no one ventured to oppose it, the Archbishop declared the resolution carried, on the principle that silence implied consent.

With the like restriction an acknowledgment of royal supremacy was afterwards obtained from the Convocation of York, so that virtually the whole Church now confessed that they took Henry, so far as Christian law allowed them, as their Supreme Head and Protector. But how little they had gained by inserting a qualifying parenthesis in the acknowledgment they were very soon to learn.

A pardon of the *præmunire* was confirmed in Parliament to "the King's spiritual subjects in the province of Canterbury," which the Houses took care should be accompanied by another pardon to his temporal subjects, seeing that they had been equally guilty with the clergy, if guilt there was, in acknowledging legatine authority. Next year, 1532, a pardon was also passed in Parliament for the spiritualty of the province of York.

Supplication of the Commons against the clergy.

But in that session of 1532 still more extraordinary proceedings were taken against the clergy. The House of Commons, quite apart from the Lords, were induced, not by any means of their own accord, to present to the King a long supplication full of grievances against the spiritual jurisdiction. They, or their draughtsmen, were careful to betray nothing like sympathy with heresy. The very first thing that they lamented was

the increase of "seditious books contrary to the very true Catholic and Christian faith." But in the examination of the heresies and fantastic opinions thus diffused, "divers ordinaries," they said, had used very extreme and uncharitable methods, which created ill-will between the clergy and the laity. It was a source of much evil that the clergy made laws in Convocation without the royal assent, and that the laity were compelled to obey those laws, though they never had their purport explained to them in English. Then followed complaints about the spiritual courts of Canterbury, about laymen being summoned before spiritual ordinaries *ex officio*, about excessive fees, excessive probate duties, and so forth. Just about the same time the lawyer Christopher St. German published anonymously a small treatise "Concerning the division between the spiritualty and temporalty," which took very much the same line as this "Supplication" of the Commons, and, while professedly trying to remove the causes of difference, was evidently well calculated to aggravate such ill-feeling as might really exist. This was the anonymous book answered by Sir Thomas More, who ironically called its author "the Pacifier."

The main object of the Supplication was undoubtedly to enable the King to deal a blow at the Spiritual Jurisdiction. The Commons acted quite apart from the Lords, and the Speaker, with some other members, was admitted to a special interview with the King to present it. They were indiscreet enough, nevertheless, at the same time to petition His Majesty to release them from their long attendance at Westminster by dissolving Parliament, so that they might repair to their homes; which showed that they were not particularly anxious to get an answer to their Supplication. The King, however, told them that their bill contained such serious matters that they must wait to hear what the clergy had to say in reply;

How the King dealt with it.

and he further reminded them that he had sent them a bill concerning wardships, to which the Lords had already agreed—that bill being the scheme of land legislation already referred to, of which the main object was to secure succession duties to the Crown against wholesale evasion by what were called "feoffments to uses." But in this matter the Commons were not disposed to be so compliant as the Lords, and they declined to pass the bill.

After the Easter recess the Supplication of the Commons was laid before Convocation, and a very full answer was drawn up in the name of the Ordinaries which really might have satisfied anybody but the King. But it was addressed to him, and he called Speaker Audeley and his faithful Commons to receive it from him. And he handed it to them with the remark, "We think their answer will smally please you, for it seemeth to us very slender. You be a great sort of wise men. I doubt not but you will look circumspectly on the matter, and we will be indifferent between you." There could be no doubt, from these words, what was expected of the Commons. They were induced to make further objections, and Convocation made various offers of compromise to the King. At length it was found that nothing would satisfy him but a complete surrender by the clergy of their old acknowledged rights as a self-governing community within the realm. And so what is known in history as "the Submission of the Clergy" was formally delivered to the King by Archbishop Warham himself.

Warham had, no doubt, fought for the independence of the clergy to the best of his power, and as early as the 21st February, a month before the presentation of the "Supplication," he had made a formal protestation against all the enactments passed in that Parliament in derogation of the Pope's authority or of the

ecclesiastical prerogatives of the province of Canterbury. He died in August following, and the King at once nominated Cranmer to succeed him as Archbishop. Matters now advanced pretty rapidly, for Cranmer was already committed to the King's cause, and of course he was required to further it still more. Bulls were procured from the Pope for his advancement in February 1533; and he took a qualified oath of obedience to the Holy See, with a protest beforehand that he did not mean it to interfere with his reforming religion and respecting the royal prerogative. By this time the King had already married Anne Boleyn in secret. Afterwards, when Cranmer was fully installed as Archbishop, he pronounced the King's marriage with Katharine null, and then held a secret inquiry at Lambeth, the result of which was that he found the marriage with Anne Boleyn valid. On what day it had taken place, or by whom the rite was performed and before what witnesses, the public were left in ignorance, and some of these particulars have never been ascertained, though there seems reason to believe that the date was St. Paul's Day, the 25th January.

Cranmer made Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the year following (1534) came the sentence from Rome; but the King met it by getting Parliament to confirm his supremacy over the Church without that qualification with which alone it had been grudgingly admitted by Convocation. And to complete the matter Parliament, under the same pressure, made it treason to acknowledge the authority of the Pope, who was henceforward to be called only "bishop of Rome," the official view being that he had no jurisdiction outside his own diocese in Italy.

To acknowledge the Pope is made treason.

It was by this extreme and, it must be owned, altogether tyrannical exercise of royal and parliamentary authority that the principle of an Established Church came into existence. But, tyrannical as royal supremacy was, once there it could not be

removed. For, in the first place, what was done was, from a mere political point of view, constitutional. Disliked, as it might be, even in Parliament itself, Parliament was too weak to resist the authority of a very vigilant and able despot. The only question was whether such things did not put England outside the comity of nations, and whether the old spiritual head of Christian Europe could not punish this gross disobedience by the union of other Powers in a crusade against the tyrant. This was actually talked about; for no other sovereign in Europe considered Henry VIII. as anything but a king lost to all faith and honourable feeling. Charles V. resented inwardly the indignity done to his aunt, Katharine of Aragon. Francis I. knew that it was his interest to stand by Henry, but had no sort of respect for him. The Pope, however, might excommunicate the King of England and call vainly upon both of them to aid in his deposition. Each of them had his reasons for forbearing to take the offensive against a king who would immediately have taken part with his rival. It was only when for a time their mutual jealousies were abated that Henry stood in real danger; but he was watchful of his opportunities, and the danger did not last long.

Nevertheless, the game he played was a most audacious one, and would never have been successful but that it was pursued, not only with wariness as well as audacity, but also with a cruelty which was altogether relentless. First Dr. Reynolds and some monks of the Charter House were tried and condemned under the new law, and suffered heroically a particularly barbarous execution. Then the venerable Bishop Fisher was beheaded, and after him Sir Thomas More. No mercy was in store for any who professed obedience to Rome, and the clergy had either to conform to the King's wishes or escape beyond sea, if they could manage it. Such a cruel

Cruel executions.

persecution had never been known in England, and has hardly been equalled since.

By these means was the Pope's authority in England extinguished; and surely we are not called upon to justify the means, but only to acknowledge the fact. If a man is murdered we do not approve of the act, but we must fill up his appointments and supply his place. It is simply a fact that a powerful sovereign, animated though he was by the basest of motives, was able to exclude England completely from the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope; for acts speedily followed against appeals to Rome and against bringing papal bulls into England, all who were implicated in such practices being subject to the penalties of treason. The Roman pontiff, in short, had ceased to be the real head of the Church in England, if there was any Church remaining in England at all.

And surely it would be a very strong thing to say that there was no Christianity, or no Church, left in England, merely because the King was so powerful and self-willed. As a matter of fact, the power, even of the strongest despots, is limited, and Henry himself never pretended to alter the faith of the country. Quite the contrary; he remained its "defender" to the last. He himself was prepared to hear the appeals that were formerly preferred to Rome; and on one conspicuous occasion he did hear one himself, and pronounced judgment on a heretic from his own high tribunal. He made no vital change of doctrine, and when, by the very fact of separation from Rome, questions pressed for settlement about the theological and spiritual basis of a separate Church, he was very careful to leave the responsibility of drawing up new formularies as much as possible in the hands of his own divines and bishops. But he set his face openly against heresy all his days; and as he acknowledged not only "the Bishop of Rome," but all other foreign

But there is no change of faith.

bishops, to have their own spiritual functions in their own proper dioceses, so he claimed for himself and his bishops and people that they remained within the pale of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church without any breach of spiritual unity.

Case of the Channel Islands.

A remarkable instance of his position in this respect, and of the little difficulties to which it might give rise, is seen in the case of the Channel Islands, which, though under the secular dominion of the King of England, belonged, in spiritual matters, to the diocese of Coutances in Normandy. So they still did long after the establishment of royal supremacy in England. But in 1542 Henry instructed his ambassador in France to inform Admiral Brion, the chief councillor of Francis I., that the Bishop of Coutances was attempting to exercise spiritual jurisdiction in Guernsey and Jersey in the name of the "Bishop of Rome"—a thing which was quite against the King's laws, and which would tend to hinder pending negotiations between these two sovereigns unless Francis interfered to stop it. The King, however, as the ambassador told Brion, was perfectly willing that the Bishop should exercise his spiritual jurisdiction in those islands, provided he did so simply as English bishops did, without reference to the "Bishop of Rome." Admiral Brion, in reply, said he had not heard of the matter, but promised that it should be seen to for Henry's satisfaction. What came of it in the end we do not absolutely know; but it seems rather as if the Bishop was restrained from carrying out an intention of visiting the islands in person, and that the English Council enforced their orders on his vicar.[1]

I have said that the King made no vital change of doctrine when he separated from the See of Rome, and made no pretence to alter the faith of the country. It may be doubted, indeed, if he had the

[1] See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. xvii. Nos. 301, 328, 404.

power to do so, even if he had the will. What he actually did in advancing bishops like Cranmer, Latimer, and Shaxton was itself very unpopular, as no one doubted they were men of heretical minds. But it would be wrong to say that he did not promote heresy in other ways, or that even in respect of doctrine he did not do much to undermine the authority of beliefs of which he was the professed defender. In fact, while disavowing heresy openly, and even persecuting it, he was glad to avail himself of the aid of heretics of any kind in the special business of overthrowing the Pope's authority. He encouraged, for instance, Dr. Barnes, the Augustinian friar, whose ardent ideas about some things were certainly no less visionary and unpractical than they were opposed to existing authority; for he deprecated not only the pomp of Cardinal Wolsey, but the special observance of great feasts like Christmas Day, and he declared it unchristian to sue a man for debt. He was, besides, smitten with Luther's doctrines, and had been guilty of selling New Testaments after having already once recanted; on which he was obliged to fly abroad, and took refuge with Luther in Germany. He was there writing Lutheran treatises when he was invited by Henry VIII.'s minister, Thomas Cromwell, to return to England. He did so, and Sir Thomas More, as Lord Chancellor, who was hard at work writing against heretics, and against his work among others, would have put him once more in prison as a runaway friar; but he came under the King's protection, and More was told that he was pardoned in hope of his amendment—which was certainly not the case. Other heretical refugees also returned to England about the same time; and Tyndale himself, whose Testament had been denounced by royal proclamation, as well as burned in St. Paul's Churchyard, was solicited to come back to England and assist the King in giving trouble to

The King's encouragement of heresy.

the clergy. Unfortunately Tyndale, whose tirades against the authority of "prelates" were otherwise all that the King could wish, was equally against the divorce, which he imputed to the craft of Wolsey; and when that was discovered he received no further invitation to come home. The King contented himself with having inspired the lawyer St. German to write against the clergy, and protected the scurrilous Simon Fish for his libellous pamphlet[1] against them.

Thus heresy, though publicly disowned, was really in great favour at Court during the period of Anne Boleyn's ascendency, and consequently a very great stimulus was given to it among the people, though it was by no means yet in general favour. No king had hitherto encouraged it, even underhand, for it was always felt to be dangerous to the social fabric, as events pretty plainly proved after Henry VIII.'s time. Sir Thomas More says expressly that it was the danger of civil disturbance that caused secular princes to punish heresy with death; for the punishment of excommunicated heretics was a secular matter, not an ecclesiastical one. And we must bear this in mind, even while we condemn the resort to such a severe remedy. No one believed that it could be altogether dispensed with; but the bishops, with whom it lay to pronounce sentence in the last instance, cutting off the obstinate heretic from the Church, were one and all—even Bishop Bonner, whom his enemies have so maligned as a truculent and ferocious prelate—most anxious to do everything to save the men brought before them by persuading them to renounce opinions which they could not but officially condemn, and which really did not seem reasonable in the face of overwhelming authority.

Now let us go back a little. Of open heresy, as we have seen, at the beginning of Henry's reign there

[1] Called *A Supplication for the Beggars*, which proposed a general confiscation of Church endowments for the relief of the poor.

was comparatively little. The heretics brought before episcopal tribunals were mostly ill-educated men, who, after some conference, consented to recant and bear fagots in evidence of their submission. Among the mercantile classes, no doubt, there was much dislike of Church authority, chiefly on account of exactions which could be recovered in spiritual courts. Then the merchants soon began to import from abroad English books printed in foreign countries by men who were eagerly set upon promoting heretical doctrines. It was this mainly that gave a new impulse to tendencies which had been brought under tolerable control. The printing press was a great means of promoting new-fangled doctrines; and mischievous books were not only printed surreptitiously at home, but were easily smuggled into the country from foreign parts. Even forbidden MSS., like Wycliffe's Bible, were read in secret meetings by night by friends of well-to-do merchants who could own such property. One such was the suicide Richard Hunne, the full extent of whose heresies, according to More, came out only after his death, although even when he was first charged, his English Bible and other heretical books of his had been discovered.[1] That he was a man who bitterly disliked the clergy is well attested. He had maintained in private that tithes were not due by divine law, but were imposed by the covetousness of priests, and he had compared the bishops and clergy to the Scribes and Pharisees who crucified our Lord. But it was only in private that he had given free vent to his disaffection till his heretical practices were dis-

Heresy and the commercial world.

1 "At such time as he was denounced for an heretic there lay his English Bible open, and some other English books of his, that every man might see the places, noted with his own hand, such words and in such wise that there would no wise man that good were, have any great doubt after the sight thereof what naughty minds the men had, both he that so noted them and he that so made them. . . . There were in the prologue of that Bible such words touching the Blessed Sacrament as good Christian men did much abhor to hear, and which gave the readers undoubted occasion to think that the book was written after Wycliffe's copy and by him translated into our tongue" (More's *Works*, p. 240 *b*).

covered, and he seems to have thought, at a time when clerical privileges were being canvassed, that the *præmunire* he sued against the clergy would establish a notable precedent in law to abate their exactions. If Sir Thomas More surmised truly, it was the failure of this action that preyed upon his mind and caused him to put an end to his own life.[1]

Hunne was, no doubt, an example of a considerable class of men who were secret heretics at the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign—men who would not do anything wilfully to affront spiritual any more than temporal authority, though they might read heretical books in secret and consult together how in various ways to thwart the spiritual jurisdiction without exposing themselves to too great danger. But it was not for ten or twelve years later that heretics were able to give serious trouble in the kingdom. First came, of course, some rumours about one Martin Luther who had raised certain controversies in Germany, and gone so far as to burn a papal bull directed against his doctrines. Early in 1521 the University of Oxford had become infected with Lutheranism, and forbidden books were circulated. Wolsey, indeed, though he sought to suppress, seemed to be doubtful at first whether he ought to burn them.[2] But the King himself was inspired with a great zeal to answer Luther; which he did with the result, well known to every one, that he obtained from the Pope the title of "Defender of the Faith." Strange it is to think that the one councillor who urged him at the time not to let devotion to the Holy See carry him too far was Sir Thomas More! But so it was that More, having seen what the King had written, suggested that one part, treating of the primacy of the See of Rome, should be left out or

Oxford and Lutheranism.

[1] More's *Works*, p. 239.

[2] See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. iii. Nos. 1197, 1210. They were burned for the first time at Paul's Cross on the 12th May 1521, and Bishop Fisher preached a sermon on the occasion. No. 1273.

modified, lest the King should afterwards find matter of dispute between himself and some pope or other. But the King declared warmly that he would not alter a single word he had written on that point, and, indeed, as he told More, he had a secret reason for maintaining it, which was new to him, and must remain to us only a matter of speculation.[1]

Lutheranism, however, might infect the universities without touching greatly the minds of the English public, which there is no reason to suppose that it did till in 1527 the bishops were distracted by the importation of Tyndale's New Testament into England —a subject of which I shall speak more fully hereafter. Nor, indeed, even then does it seem that Luther was at all popular in this country. Difficult as it was to suppress printed Testaments, heresy received a far greater stimulus from the King's passion for Anne Boleyn. For as soon as he had made up his mind to marry her, even in defiance of the Holy See, it was evident to him that heretics, though he might disown their doctrines, would be very valuable allies in weakening old ecclesiastical authority, and what encouragement he gave them has been partly seen already. Anne Boleyn was for some years the great dominant influence at Court and in the kingdom. It was for her sake—to justify his marriage with her and his previous divorce from Katharine—that the King had Reynolds and the Carthusian martyrs put to death with a brutality like that of the Turks. It was for her sake that he also took the lives of More and Fisher, declared his own daughter Mary a bastard, compelled her to follow in the train of her infant half-sister Elizabeth, and kept her apart from her mother lest the two should give each other comfort. It was for her sake, as he himself was well aware, that he had greatly lost the hearts of his subjects, and laid himself open to dangers from abroad that only inces-

Tyndale's New Testament.

[1] See More's *English Works*, p. 1426.

sant watchfulness could meet. Indeed, the tension was too great, and after the death of Katharine, Anne Boleyn's power over him was at an end. He felt that he must make no more sacrifices for a woman whom he had long ceased really to care for, and who had only become a source of grave political inconvenience. So by another act of injustice he tried to set himself, in a manner, right with the world, and Anne Boleyn's head fell on the scaffold.

Fall of Anne Boleyn.

She met with little sympathy, though here and there men considered her fate unjust. At first the world hoped that, now she was gone and her marriage with the King declared invalid, justice would at length be done to his legitimate daughter Mary. But this was very far from Henry's intention; for it would have involved a condemnation of his own acts, which was about the last thing to be expected of him. He was not going to give up his supremacy over the Church, or to allow that his divorce from Katharine had been unwarranted. But he was willing to take his daughter again into favour, provided that she was entirely tractable. If she desired to be reconciled to him she must sign a confession that the marriage of her father and mother was against God's law and man's. And to this revolting indignity she was actually compelled to submit that she might be free from the constant menace of the statutes which made it treason to affirm otherwise. That her own father would actually have dared to put her to death if she refused it is, perhaps, possible to doubt. But there is no doubt at all that this was not only threatened, but that a set of servile courtiers about her told her plainly that she deserved it. Apart from the danger to which she was exposed, life must have been absolutely intolerable until she had come to some kind of understanding with her unnatural parent. So she signed the paper presented to her with the required confession; but she signed it without reading it, and

made a private protestation by advice of the Imperial ambassador that she had done so under compulsion. We must remember this in connection with Mary's conduct when she came to the throne.

So royal supremacy over the Church, with the exclusion of papal authority as a consequence, was still maintained after the death of her for whose sake it had been enforced with so much severity. Accustomed as we have been to the principle for nearly four centuries now, it still strikes many a devout mind as incongruous; and, curiously enough, among the chief enemies of royal supremacy are many of those whom it protects from a papal supremacy which they would dislike still more. Yet it must be owned that the suggestion of secular government over a spiritual society is repulsive, if it mean that a mere secular ruler has any power over the principles of faith and morals, which in fact no such ruler can have. Hence the object for which royal supremacy was first proclaimed and enforced did nothing to recommend it to men of honest feelings. The victims of the first Act of Supremacy were martyrs for the sanctity of marriage. Most of the men who sought for reform in the Church, or who hated the existing order without any idea how to improve it, sided with the King in the matter of his divorce, and based their hopes on what he might be persuaded to do in the exercise of his supremacy. But the King was careful generally to do as little as possible. Two formidable rebellions in the north were the consequences of what he actually did, and he was anxious to incur no further dangers, either at home or abroad. In 1539, indeed, he was seriously alarmed, and made strenuous preparations to resist invasion. Three years later he went so far as to thank the Imperial minister Granvelle for offering by his master's means to procure his reconciliation to the Pope. But he had never any intention

of recalling what he had done if he could possibly avoid it, and as the danger passed away he remained Supreme Head of the Church to his dying day.

Thomas Cromwell.

Nevertheless his breach with the Pope and his appointment of Thomas Cromwell, a very worldly-minded layman, as his vicegerent in spiritual causes, to lord it over the clergy, had been a fruitful source of heresy and irreverence. Even before Cromwell's fall some check to this was found necessary, and the severe Act of the Six Articles, which the lay lords were unanimous in passing, and only a minority of the bishops opposed for a while, very effectually silenced those who would fain have disputed the sacramental doctrine of the Church. But this did not prevent a considerable revival of Lollardy under a new name; for those who based their principles merely on Scripture instead of Church authority had come to be known as men of "the New Learning." It was not called Lollardy any more when the Archbishop of Canterbury himself was of that school, and was doing everything in his power to bring it into credit. Men might say, and did say, that the Archbishop himself was a heretic; the King said so too in a jesting way, when complaints were made of him all over Kent; but without a Primate so entirely "safe" on the subject which concerned His Majesty most, how could the King have maintained his favourite principle of royal supremacy over the Church? In the great rebellion in the north, Cranmer, Latimer, and other bishops placed in their sees for Anne Boleyn's sake, had been denounced as heretical by the insurgents who clamoured for their punishment. But the King made a treacherous show of conciliation, and then, after a delusive pardon, punished almost all concerned in the movement with appalling severity at the very time that Cardinal Pole was passing through France on his abortive mission from Rome to get the Powers of Europe to

unite in compelling Henry to return to the obedience of Holy Church.

The failure of rebellion within the kingdom, the failure of repeated efforts at Rome to organise pressure from without, the failure of so-called "conspiracies" against Cranmer as favouring false doctrine, of course encouraged "the New Learning," whatever might be done by the Act of the Six Articles to check sacramentary heresies, and even these cropped up a little in spite of the statute. Anne Askew was the principal victim—the only remarkable one except the poor lad Mekins, who was burned for rash utterances that he would fain afterwards have recalled. But the Act of the Six Articles said nothing whatever against "the New Learning," and a solibiblical view of religion spread itself more and more. The King could not well suppress this after he had already authorised an English Bible to be used in churches; and in spite of proclamations to the contrary, enthusiasts read that English Bible aloud, as John Porter did in St. Paul's Cathedral, with comments of their own, to crowds who collected to listen. Cranmer went so far as to appoint three preachers of "the New Learning" out of the six who were to preach in Canterbury Cathedral, and silenced remonstrance by saying that he had the King's authority to appoint preachers of different schools.[1] The King himself was much annoyed at the controversies that sprang up, and in dissolving his last Parliament in December 1545, complained of the frequency with which men bandied about the terms of heretic and Anabaptist, Papist, hypocrite, and Pharisee. "Be these tokens of charity among you?" he asked, with a moral fervour that must have seemed extraordinary coming from such lips: "Are these the signs of fraternal love between you?"[2]

Henry VIII. troubled with controversies.

[1] *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. xviii. pt. ii., Pref. p. 44, etc.
[2] Hall's *Chronicle*, p. 365 (ed. 1809).

The King, in truth, was in sad perplexity as to the result of his own policy. The men of "the New Learning" were the most zealous friends of his own royal supremacy; the men of the Old Learning were the great mass of his subjects, as orthodox as ever in heart and life, who could justify his statement to the world that the abrogation of papal authority had not made the English a nation of heretics. He could not dispense with the services of either school; and if those of Cranmer were indispensable on the one hand, those of Gardiner were not less so on the other. Gardiner had bowed to royal supremacy from weakness, as he himself afterwards confessed, and men knew pretty well that at heart he did not love it. Yet he had written the best vindication of it when all the bishops were called on to write in its defence. He, in fact, had been led on to it step by step. Having been, as Wolsey's secretary, engaged in promoting at Rome the business of a divorce with an ability that no other man could equal, the King took him into his own service and gave him the bishopric of Winchester. This, however, was not the reward of mere time serving; for among politicians, at least, no man was less of a sycophant. He had often disputed the King's opinion on various subjects before he received his bishopric, and the King liked him none the worse for his frank declaration of his own views. But the bishopric certainly broke down his independence rather painfully, and he found himself called on to write treatises, not merely in support of the King's supremacy, but even (for the benefit of foreign courts) in justification of some of his worst acts of tyranny; for he wrote, sad to say, a justification of the deaths of Fisher and Sir Thomas More, which must have cost him sore distress, though he only attempted to show that those executions were done under the law, and with less severity than might have been lawfully used.

Gardiner.

Nevertheless he remained, even in Henry VIII.'s days, a firm upholder of the old faith and of old practices which the new school were anxious to discredit. In the latter part of the reign images and shrines were removed by authority where they had been objects of superstitious pilgrimages and offerings,[1]—greatly, of course, to the satisfaction of those who held image-worship in contempt or abhorrence; but there was no general order for their removal, and public feeling did not greatly approve the orders actually given. Yet Cranmer rebuked one of the six preachers of Canterbury for insisting in a sermon that the use of images did not imply idolatry, for *idolum* meant precisely the same thing in the Greek as *imago* did in Latin.[2] When arguments of this sort were used to effect a change, was it wonderful that Cranmer's prebendaries complained of him? Gardiner felt that their complaints were just, but, knowing how high Cranmer stood in the King's favour, recommended them to be cautious. Cranmer, in truth, was urging on the King at the end of the reign new reforms, which Gardiner effectually opposed as they would endanger negotiations then going on both with France and with the Emperor. But the King himself, as Head of the Church, was getting embarrassed between two opposing spiritual policies, each of which seemed necessary in some degree for his own preservation; and it is not unlikely that his perplexities in these matters had much to do with the shortening of his days.

After he died it was soon made clear which policy was to prevail. His son and heir was a mere boy in the tenth year of his age. Government fell into the hands of a close company of the late King's councillors, from whom it was easy to eliminate the very few adherents of old ideas—the oldest councillor,

Religious change carried further after his death.

[1] *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. xvi. Nos. 1258, 1262, etc.
[2] *Ib.* vol. xviii. pt. ii., Pref. p. 42, etc.

indeed, being at that very time in the Tower, only saved from the block which was prepared for him by the fact of the King's death. This little company gave themselves titles, and agreed at first to put themselves under the Duke of Somerset, the King's uncle, as Protector. They turned Gardiner out of the Privy Council on the pretext that the late King had a great dislike to him, and presently interfered with him even in his episcopal functions. Images were pulled down and mutilated in Gardiner's own diocese, and when he inquired into the outrage and complained, he found that the Protector really sympathised with what was done. By and by the whole Church of England was subjected to a royal visitation, which both Gardiner and Bonner objected to; but they were both sent to prison. Convocation clamoured in vain for the use of old liberties and the fulfilment of old promises to the clergy. But new liberties were allowed them instead. They were allowed to marry; and as they themselves agreed to communion in both kinds, these changes were legalised by Act of Parliament.

Very strange it may undoubtedly appear, that any kind of order should have ultimately come of a religious revolution which Henry VIII., to his dying day, had been anxious, out of politic considerations, to keep within bounds, but which carried all before it in the days of his juvenile successor. But order was not speedily developed. Englishmen like Cardinal Pole, who watched the situation from abroad, feared for their country when a child succeeded to the throne whose councillors still repudiated the jurisdiction of the spiritual head of Christendom. Royal supremacy, however, was still maintained; the child was, like his father, Supreme Head of the English Church — aye, just as much as if he had attained to riper years. This was a point that the Council felt it necessary to insist upon in opposition

to those who, like Gardiner, sought to maintain that no ecclesiastical change ought to be made till the King came to years of discretion. Of course they were in some sense right: royal supremacy, if it were to rule the Church at all, could not remain in abeyance for a period of ten or eleven years. But the result was, royal supremacy was wielded by a Protector who paved the way for revolutionary changes, partly by Acts of Parliament, partly by encouraging lawlessness in advance of legislation, and partly by keeping bishops as fast bound as ever, so that they could neither stir hand nor foot to redress disorders in the Church till a new set of prelates could be appointed to enforce altogether new principles of Church discipline.

Progress of the change.

Yet even a revolution works by gradual stages. As to Church ritual there was first issued an "Order of Communion" in English, to be used along with the priests' Latin Mass. Then a Book of Common Prayer, composed by a committee of divines at Windsor, was approved by Parliament and ordered to be used in churches. Somerset meanwhile, no doubt, had been doing something for freedom in getting the Legislature to abolish the Act of the Six Articles and the statutes against heresy. But the freedom given was anarchy; there was actually fighting inside St. Paul's and other London churches, while preachers of opposite schools proclaimed from different pulpits contrary doctrines touching the Eucharist. Gardiner and Bonner were illegally imprisoned, and insurrections broke out in a number of different parts of the country, some of which were distinctly on account of religion and against the use of the new Prayer Book.

The Protector, however, found, as was not unnatural, that his seat was insecure. He was obliged to put his own brother to death for intrigue and conspiracy. But a still more unscrupulous conspirator, the Earl of Warwick, afterwards Duke of

Northumberland, got command of the Council, turned him out of office, and eventually had him put to death. The religious revolution which some had looked upon at first as partly the cause of Somerset's fall, was carried further than ever. Orders were given by Bishop Ridley, who was intruded into Bonner's diocese, to take down altars everywhere and set up tables in place of them; but, even before orders, given men had been turning the altars into pens for pigsties. Bishops who declined to follow similar courses were imprisoned and deprived. Gardiner was replaced by Ponet, as Bonner had been by Ridley. Heath was ousted from Worcester, and his see given *in commendam* to Hooper, already made Bishop of Gloucester. Day was deprived of Chichester, and his place filled by Bishop Scory. The gentle Bishop Tunstall himself was sent to the Tower, and arrangements were made for the partition of his diocese. Then a second Prayer-Book was compiled to supersede the first, and bring it more into conformity with the ideas of German and Swiss reformers; and its use was ordered by a Second Act of Uniformity, while those who refused to come to church and hear the new services were to be subjected to ecclesiastical censures by the new-made bishops, all power to enforce ancient order having been taken completely from the old. At the end of the reign there were actually five bishops of the old school in prison.

Now, what could people think of the character of all these proceedings? Many, of course, were in sympathy with the revolution, otherwise it could not have been effected; but the question of its legitimacy depended on the authority by which the things were done, and the authority by which they were done was simply that of a secular government in the hands of a political faction. No such bold invasion of the spiritual province had been seen even under Henry VIII. There was scarcely a pretence any longer of

preserving the principles of a united Christendom. For Transubstantiation was now disowned; the mass was turned into a communion; a new ordinal was instituted for the consecration of bishops, priests, and deacons, all minor orders being abrogated. Men were invested with sacred functions by no other authority than that of an Act of Parliament; the faith itself was defined anew; and though it was hopeless to contend with accomplished facts, there must have been a strong feeling in many minds that the new order of things was not built upon sound and lasting principles. There might, no doubt, have been great abuses in the old order. Bishop Hooper seems to have exposed a strange amount of ignorance and unfitness among the clergy of his Gloucester diocese; but the authority under which Bishop Hooper acted could not but seem liable to question.

The rulers about the young King were themselves conscious of this, and when they saw that the poor lad's days were numbered they trembled for their lives. Northumberland, as a desperate man, organised a conspiracy to alter the succession. He got the young King's own consent to the project, and terrified even the judges, with one exception, into acquiescence. And no sooner had Edward breathed his last—a fact that was kept secret for two whole days—than active preparations were made to secure, by force of arms, the succession of Lady Jane Grey. But such a very forced and unconstitutional movement was foredoomed to failure. Lady Jane was proclaimed Queen on the 10th July 1553; but the true heir, Mary, was proclaimed in London on the 19th, the attempt in favour of the unwilling usurper having entirely collapsed. Constitutionally, things had righted themselves as far as the succession was concerned. But to put down a rebellion and remove an usurper was not sufficient to secure the peace of the kingdom. The spirit which had suggested and encouraged that vile

Conspiracy to alter the succession.

conspiracy required to be put down as well. And wherein lay the strength and danger of such movements except in a new-fangled religion which, even in the days of Henry VIII., had already altered the sanctions of public morality and of public policy?

We may talk of Reformation principles now and believe that there was much good in the abrogation of the Pope's authority. Of course, there is good in all things; even things originally evil work out good in the end. But we have not known the change in our day. Papal authority has never been a reality for us, and the despotism that drove out that authority has been equally unknown for centuries past. Royal supremacy works now without cruelty and without tyranny. It admits a large and wholesome toleration for other religions than that of the supreme ruler; but it entirely ignores the exercise of any spiritual jurisdiction which is not derived from him—except, indeed, of such jurisdiction as communities voluntarily submit to. Living in the midst of ease and freedom from these causes, we cannot easily picture to ourselves the state of matters when a violent breach was made in the sanctions of private and international morality by cutting off the Church of England from papal jurisdiction and paralysing the authority of its bishops.

Papal jurisdiction and the old English constitution.

If sound constitutional government was to be restored under Mary it was clear that the realm must be brought once more to acknowledge the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope, and efforts must be made to put down heresy. For what else had occasioned all the cruelty and turmoil of the last twenty years and more? Heresy was not a mere matter of opinion which one might hold without offence. The new Queen had been the special victim of aggressive heresy even from girlish years. It was heresy that inspired her father with the thought of divorcing her mother in defiance of the Apostolic See. It was heresy that made him

procure laws from a subservient Parliament to abolish the Pope's authority in England. It was heresy that made him virtually imprison and ill-use her mother and herself, endeavouring to extort from the former a confession that she was only his sister-in-law, and from the latter that she was the bastard issue of an incestuous union. And this horrible and untrue confession, after her mother's death, she was actually compelled to sign with averted eyes, in order to be allowed to live in peace. Nor did heresy cease to persecute her after her father's death. Only by the Emperor's intercession was she allowed to have mass in her own household after the new Prayer-Book had been authorised by Parliament, and, notwithstanding this promise of toleration, her chaplains were prosecuted for saying it, and every effort was used to coerce her.

With all this, one might imagine it was not easy for Mary to be tolerant of the new religion. And yet tolerant she was at first, as far as she could well be. Almost as soon as she had quiet possession of her throne she issued a proclamation declaring that she could not conceal her own religion, but did not wish to compel her subjects to adopt it, and desired them to forbear from branding each other as papists and heretics till some good order could be taken on the matter by common consent. Of course, restoration of the Pope's authority was in her mind from the first, and, really, to this matter in itself the opposition did not seem formidable among the nation at large. But the question how it was to be brought about was attended with practical difficulties. Some of the things done by her brother were at once set aside as unconstitutional and unjust. The imprisoned bishops were set at liberty and restored to their sees, and Convocation was summoned to discuss the situation generally. But the things done by her father were really more fundamental and were not so easily

How was the Pope's authority to be restored?

undone. She herself, with the crown, succeeded to the abhorred title of "Supreme Head of the Church of England." That was in itself an abnegation of the Pope's authority. Yet in truth she could only restore the Pope through the medium of that royal authority to which she objected; and even that she might call her Parliament together she must first get crowned in an excommunicated kingdom, throwing herself upon the Pope's indulgence for an act which was so irregular because of its necessity.

That secular things should thus have precedence of spiritual was against her natural feelings; but presently she was persuaded to allow of this in another matter, for the sake, as she fully believed, of religion itself. Quite convinced of her own incompetence to solve the great question before her without assistance, she took counsel with the Emperor, who recommended her to marry his son Philip, after which the religious restoration, he told her, could be more satisfactorily effected. It was advice entirely in the Emperor's own interest, and very much against the interests of England, and even those of religion. For the result was to commit England to the cause of one great continental potentate in a European struggle, and to make, at the same time, a dangerous change in foreign policy, as England had been, until her accession, for some years the ally of France. But such had been the cruelty of her position before coming to the throne that Mary had really no counsellors at home whom she could trust. Under her father's and her brother's rule she had always betaken herself, in positions of extreme difficulty, to the advice of her cousin the Emperor and of his ambassador in England.

Queen Mary's marriage to Philip.

Cardinal Pole was coming from Rome to absolve the realm from excommunication, and he was anxious to do so, as the Queen herself was anxious that he should, as soon as possible, even for the sake of his

native land. But the Emperor contrived to keep him in Germany till the marriage with Philip was accomplished, and it was not till a year and four months had elapsed after the Queen's accession that the Cardinal at length arrived and reconciled the realm to Rome. In England the only great objection to the reconciliation had been the fear entertained by the grantees of Church lands that they would be required to give back their possessions to ecclesiastical uses. But on this subject assurance was obtained from Rome that present possessors were not to be disturbed; and on the 30th November 1554 Cardinal Pole, as the Pope's legate, in presence of a kneeling Parliament, even the King and Queen being on their knees before him, formally absolved the realm from excommunication for past disobedience and schism.

Reconciliation of the realm to Rome.

On this followed a further step fraught with the most serious consequences—the revival of three old statutes against heresy, one of which had been abolished by Henry VIII., and the two others by the Protector Somerset. Henry, of course, had made it no heresy to say anything against the Pope; the Protector Somerset got rid of all penal enactments against heresy whatever. Somerset was, no doubt, influenced largely by humane considerations in this; but none the less was it a necessary step with a view to the religious changes which he intended to bring about, for it rendered the bishops absolutely powerless either to prosecute for false doctrine or effectually to denounce it. Nor was there any great desire now among the ruling classes to restore their lost power to the hierarchy; for though the bill passed through the Commons with very little difficulty, it met with some opposition in the Lords, both on the ground that it would make the bishops too powerful, and because many considered that after such a long encouragement of heresy the penalty of burning would be too severe.[1]

Revival of the Acts against heresy.

[1] Renard to the Emperor, *Granvelle Papers*, iv. 347.

In this they were undoubtedly right. But how else was Mary to restore the old religion and make it respected as before? The only basis of real order in things spiritual that had yet been seen was the Pope's primacy over a universal Church. Since that had been abolished, or disowned by the nation, there had been no real order at all. Even the strong and wilful Henry VIII. had not been able to establish his ecclesiastical policy on firm and consistent ground. Under Edward, bishops had been imprisoned for holding by what was really legal and constitutional. To restore any real Church authority it was necessary to return to papal supremacy, and to make that effective there was nothing for it but to renew the old heresy Acts.

Moreover, it must be remembered that heresy at this time undoubtedly meant disloyalty. Before young Edward's death was known to the public Bishop Ridley had preached at Paul's Cross that Mary was a bastard. The vile plot against her succession had religion for its groundwork and pretext, and a restoration of Edwardine religion was the secret object of Wyatt's rebellion, though it professed to be merely in opposition to the Spanish marriage and the danger of England being overrun by Spaniards. For, unpopular as that match was in itself, it was naturally hated most of all by heretics, just because it was intended as a means of restoring and strengthening the authority of Rome. Nor did the fact that Philip himself was averse to strong measures, and that his Spanish confessor, preaching before the Court, actually protested against the burnings as soon as they began, do anything to relieve the difficulty of the situation. The case was simply that there were a number of persons determined to thwart the Queen's proceedings in religion as far as lay within their power—not to demand mere toleration for themselves, but to pluck down what they called idolatry everywhere, and to keep the Edwardine services in the parish churches in

defiance of all authority, and even of the feelings of many of their fellow-parishioners. In short, there was a spirit of rebellion still in the land which had its root in religious bitterness; and if Mary was to reign in peace, and order was to be upheld, that spirit must be repressed.

The revival of the heresy laws was, therefore, a mere necessity of the situation—a necessity regretted even at the time that they were reimposed. Yet few probably could have believed in the great host of victims who would suffer themselves to be immolated on the reimposition of those painful guarantees for the old order of things. Two hundred and seventy-seven persons are recorded to have been burned in various parts of England during those sad three years and nine months from the time the persecution began to the death of Mary. But the appalling number of the sufferers must not blind us altogether to the provocation. Nor must it be forgotten that if it be once judged right to pass an Act of Parliament, it is right to put it in force. To relent would have implied simply that the authorities feared they had been wrong in passing it, and the result would have been to yield the victory to those powers of disorder which they had endeavoured to withstand. Nevertheless, the extreme severity of the persecution undoubtedly alienated many of the English people from the Church of Rome far more than they had been ever alienated before.

The burnings for heresy.

CHAPTER II

HOW THE PAST WAS VIEWED UNDER QUEEN ELIZABETH

Causes of change.

FROM what has been shown in the preceding chapter it will be seen that the motive powers which were really effective in changing the basis of Church authority, down to the death of Mary, were as follows:—

1. What was called Lollardy in the fifteenth century —an influence which arose mainly out of Wycliffe's translation of the Bible, and which tended to regard the book more and more as an infallible and all-sufficient guide in faith and morals, capable also of infallible interpretation by private judgment. This influence (which was quite incompatible with Church authority) had certainly died down to a great extent before Henry VIII.'s reign, when it was revived by the publication of Tyndale's New Testament and by the power of the printing press in disseminating copies of that and other heretical literature.

2. Henry VIII.'s breach with Rome, occasioned by his passion for Anne Boleyn, which he was determined to gratify under the form of marriage by procuring a divorce from Katharine of Aragon. His assumption of royal supremacy over the Church, and the legislation which he procured to extinguish papal jurisdiction in England, gave the greatest encouragement to Lollard views under the name of the New Learning, notwithstanding his strong and persistent assertion of orthodoxy in the matter of sacramental doctrine.

3. After Henry's death, owing to the minority of his son the supreme power fell into the hands of scheming politicians, who caballed against each other, but had no thought of restoring papal jurisdiction. Their action in Church matters was to a great extent lawless and unconstitutional, and they made a revolution in favour of the New Learning by imprisoning the bishops who sought to do their duty on the principles heretofore acknowledged, turning them out of their sees and filling their places with others. They, however, obtained the approval both of Convocation and of Parliament to communion in both kinds and to the marriage of the clergy, and they issued two successive Books of Common Prayer, each of them in turn being authorised by an Act of Uniformity.

4. Queen Mary, on succeeding to the throne, declined to acknowledge the validity of what had been done in Church matters during her brother's reign, as he had not come to years of discretion. But even she could not escape the consequences of her father's and her brother's doings, and indeed she tacitly accepted what her father had done as valid till it could be repealed. If, therefore, she restored the Pope's authority, she restored it by virtue of that royal supremacy which she detested; and, indeed, it could not have been restored in any other manner. Rome had no power to reclaim possession of England by her own strength. The ardour of Mary, of Pole, and of the Pope of Rome had all to wait upon political considerations, which practically meant that the Emperor's plans must be carried out, the Queen must be married to his son, and the English Parliament must have full security about certain important temporal matters, before the Pope's authority could be restored. When all this had been obtained—by the Emperor on one side and by the English Parliament on the other—there was very little difficulty made in high quarters about doctrine. It was only

that the Pope's doctrine now was to be enforced by royal supremacy, instead of doctrine of a different character.

Now this was a result that could not be satisfactory to religious minds on either side, and while people in England died in hundreds for Edwardine doctrines, Pope Paul IV., in his fervent zeal, found little satisfaction in all that had been effected. He confessed, indeed, at first, that Pole had done a great work in reconciling England to the See of Rome. But he considered Spain the worst enemy the Papacy ever had; and while he was willing to regard Mary as a true daughter of the Church, he had no feeling at all for her husband. He was ungrateful ultimately even to Cardinal Pole and took away his legation, and he provoked Mary herself to resistance in some matters. So what might have ultimately come of the relations between England and the Vatican if Mary had lived much longer, is a matter of speculation. All her zeal for the restoration of papal authority had only led her to assert it by royal supremacy after allying herself with a power disliked, not altogether unjustly, by the Roman Pontiff himself; and the Roman Pontiff, who even went so far as to use Lutheran troops against the Spaniards in war, felt apparently that papal authority restored by royal authority in such a fashion need hardly have been restored at all.

Accession of Elizabeth.

Curiously enough, he seems to have felt more kindly to Elizabeth on her accession than he had done to Mary. It has been commonly believed on the authority of Father Sarpi that there was an immediate breaking off of relations between the Vatican and England on Elizabeth's accession, Paul IV. declaring to Carne, the English ambassador at Rome, that he could not recognise the claim of a bastard to the crown. But the statement must have been founded on a mere *a priori* view of what might have been expected to take place, for the evidence of documents

is distinctly opposed to it. Carne remained at Rome, even at the Pope's request, after he had received letters of recall, and Elizabeth was not displeased at his doing so. Paul IV. was particularly anxious to keep on good terms with her, and refused to comply with the solicitations of the French to declare against her. Nay, he probably would have followed the advice of one of his most influential cardinals to send her a nuncio had she on her part shown any desire to receive one.[1] And though Pope Paul died within a year of her accession, yet his successor, Pius IV., would fain have followed the like policy with a view to the reassembling of the Council of Trent. He even commissioned a nuncio, it would seem, to inform Elizabeth that if she were afraid her title might be questioned on the score of illegitimate birth, it was in the power of the Holy See to remedy that defect.[2] But Elizabeth had other views, and the Pope yielded to the advice of Philip, who believed he could effect a reconciliation between her and the Holy See if the nuncio, who had actually reached Brussels, were ordered not to proceed.[3]

Elizabeth, in truth, in the early years of her reign, was working her way through many difficulties which, though she desired to keep on good terms with him, she did not expect the Holy Father to do much to lighten for her. On her sister's death a host of fugitives for religion came back to England from Germany and Switzerland, and it was felt that some broad settlement in religious matters was requisite to include as large a body of opinion as possible within one communion. The exiles of Frankfort and Geneva, who had been torn by intestine feuds when abroad, seemed to feel that now was the time to make up their differences and wait the decision of an

Return of Protestant exiles.

[1] Dixon's *Hist. of the Church of England*, v. 249-54.
[2] Sanders' *de Schismate*, p. 288 (ed. Colon. Agripp. 1628).
[3] *Foreign Calendar*, A.D. 1560, No. 507. Comp. Dixon, v. 284-6.

English Parliament as to the form of future worship. The principle of uniformity was on all hands thought necessary; but the parliamentary settlement was attended with pain. A new Act of Supremacy was passed, abolishing all foreign authority within the Queen's dominions, which, of course, put an end to papal jurisdiction once more; but the title given to the sovereign in the oath of supremacy was no longer "Supreme Head of the Church," but "supreme governor of the realm, as well in spiritual as in temporal causes." Then a new Act of Uniformity was passed, restoring, with some modifications, the second Prayer-Book of Edward VI. But, of course, these enactments encountered strong opposition from the Marian bishops. A theological disputation, arranged at Westminster while the second bill was before Parliament, proved abortive, as the Romanist divines who accepted the challenge objected to the prescribed order of discussion. Shortly afterwards, when a commission was appointed to administer the oath of supremacy, it was refused by every one of the bishops except Kitchin of Llandaff, and by a large number of the clergy besides. The number of bishops at the time had already been reduced by vacancies from twenty-six to sixteen; and of these sixteen, fifteen were deprived. Of the clergy generally the proportion could not have been so great; but it is to be feared they were much more numerous than it is agreeable to believe.[1]

Royal supremacy again.

Thus the final constitution of the English Church was the result of a compromise. The reassertion of royal supremacy to the exclusion of foreign jurisdiction, unpopular as it no doubt was with the existing clergy, was generally acquiesced in, even by them, and approved by the nation at large. It, moreover,

[1] Exact statistics on this subject do not appear to be really attainable; but the inferences of Dr. Gee in his *Elizabethan Clergy* have been rather seriously shaken by Father H. N. Birt, O.S.B., in his book on *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement*.

reconciled the returned exiles to the revived Edwardine Prayer-Book, which Calvin himself admitted to be endurable notwithstanding what he called its sillinesses (*tolerabiles ineptiæ* were the words he used about it). For the Prayer-Book, even now, derived its sanction only from royal and parliamentary authority; it had never been authorised by Convocation, either in Edward's time or in Elizabeth's. But while some regarded it as the best substitute for the old Latin services, and many, doubtless, had come to love it for its own sake, others accepted it only in the spirit of Calvin and John Knox.

But, what with the deprivations of Romanist bishops and clergy, and, on the other hand, the return of the exiles and the memory of the Marian persecution, a new influence had manifestly begun to control things spiritual, and opposition to the old pretensions of Rome had found a deep place in the nation's heart and life. Among the returned exiles was John Foxe, who apparently remained at Basel only to see through the press a volume on which he was then engaged before leaving for his native country. That work was a Latin narrative of the recent persecutions in England, founded largely upon information procured for him by his friend Grindal.[1] Even before the Marian persecutions, and while he was still in England, he had been preparing to write a Church history which should treat especially of persecutions since the days of Wycliffe; and he had already published a "first book" of it at Strassburg in 1554. But, of course, the accounts he received from England of the trials and sufferings of his brethren in the faith compelled him to make a large addition to what he had written. Still, the volume which Oporinus published for him at Basel in 1559 was only Part I. of a history of recent persecutions, its scope being limited to England and Scotland, though he intended

Foxe, the martyrologist.

[1] See Strype's *Life of Grindal*, pp. 25-32.

the whole work to embrace other nations as well.[1] He left a Second Part to be supplied by another hand a few years later, and on his return to his native land he set himself to embody the contents of what he had already written, augmented by large research, in an English work no less comprehensive in its scope than his whole original design. After amassing documents and exploring episcopal registers with unwearied industry, he gave to the world in 1563 the results of his labours in an enormous folio volume entitled *Actes and Monuments of these latter perillous dayes touching matters of the Church.* That is not the whole title, but the reader may as well pause to take breath before reading the rest. The words which follow are significant of the spirit and purport of the book: *wherein are comprehended and described the great persecutions and horrible troubles that have been wrought and practised by the Romishe Prelates, speciallye in this Realme of England and Scotlande, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande, unto the tyme nowe present.*

Under what special favour and encouragement so large and expensive a work was produced we do not distinctly know.[2] It was printed by his friend John Daye, and illustrated by an abundance of wood-cuts vividly representing not only the burnings of martyrs, but numerous other forms of torture always inflicted, as the reader was led to understand, on men who

[1] The title was "Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum quæ postremis et periculosis his temporibus evenerunt, maximarumque per Europam persecutionum ac Sanctorum Dei martyrum, cæterarumque rerum si quæ insignioris exempli sint, digesti per regna et nationes Commentarii."

[2] Foxe's great patron was his former pupil, the Duke of Norfolk, who kept a very expensive establishment at Aldgate; but he arrived in London in poverty, and frankly complains in one letter to the Duke himself of the withdrawal of his liberality, when it would be easy for his Grace to set aside some small allowance for him out of his vast expenditure. See memoir in J. Pratt's *Foxe*, vol. i. p. 31. The Duke, however, gave him free quarters in that house, where he took up his abode, going every Monday to the printing-house of John Daye to superintend the publication of his great work. See Richard Daye's "Epistle Dedicatory" to his translation of Foxe's *Christ Jesus Triumphant.*

were constant to the true Gospel in opposition to the authorities. Of the effect of its publication Dr. Dixon informs us that it "awoke an emotion in the country which cannot be conceived":—

> The families, the relations, the friends and neighbours of the hundreds who had been done to death by fire in the late persecution, read with mingled grief and pride the narratives of the trials of their lost ones, their boldness, constancy, and acuteness under examination, their sufferings and death. The story of divinely strengthened fortitude and of baffled and mistaken cruelty was carried through the land. A vast collection of originals of acts and processes, of minutes of examinations taken down by notaries, of the recollections of eye-witnesses, records of every kind, brought again before the eyes which had beheld [them] the terrible scenes which had scarcely ceased to be enacted; and renewed in certainty the power of reality.[1]

Notwithstanding some criticisms passed upon it by friends and foes even on its first publication, the book certainly attained a wonderful popularity. It was three times reprinted during Foxe's own life, and a fifth edition appeared before the end of the century. In 1571 it was ordered by Convocation that every bishop should have a copy of it in his house, along with a large edition of the Bible and other religious works.[2] It was chained to desks in parish churches as an edifying and godly book. Probably it rose in public favour after the papal excommunication of Queen Elizabeth, which was fulminated in the year just before the order of Convocation. Under any circumstances, the impression which it made was deep and lasting, and has continued down to our own day. But the time has surely come when history may dispassionately weigh its merits and do something to counteract the partisanship of the judgments that have been passed on it by writers of opposite schools. Complete freedom from

Popularity of his book.

[1] Dixon, v. 327.

[2] Wilkins, iv. 263.

bias may not even yet, of course, be attainable; but time itself has abated many prejudices, and modern facilities for research ought to favour clearness of view. I accordingly venture to hope that the following comments will assist in the formation of something like a reasonable estimate of a work which the Church historian of England can in no case allow himself to overlook.

Design of the work.

It was the distinct purpose of Foxe in this work to invest the martyrs of his own day with the same halo of sanctity as that with which pious tradition had illuminated those of the primitive Church. "If martyrs are to be compared with martyrs," he writes, "I see no cause why the martyrs of our time deserve any less commendation than the others in the primitive Church, which assuredly are inferior unto them in no point of praise, whether we view the number of them that suffered, or greatness of their torments, or their constancy in dying, or also consider the fruit that they brought to the amendment of posterity and increase of the Gospel. *They* did water with their blood the truth that was newly springing up; so these by their deaths restored it again, being sore decayed and fallen down." Inspired by this idea he had set himself to write a great book which should rival the legends of saints and displace a good many of them in the popular estimation. And in this he succeeded. But in planning his work he determined to follow precedent to some extent, and prefixed to it a "Kalender" of the twelve months of the year, in which, while Christmas Day, Lady Day, and most of the Apostles' days were retained in their old places, almost all the other days were consecrated to the memory of very modern martyrs, chiefly of Mary's reign. Here the result was somewhat extraordinary; for it can hardly be said, however much we sympathise with their sufferings, that the names of a host of fervid artisans who gave their lives to testify their faith in

a simple gospel have been embalmed in our memories by Foxe's "Kalender." There, indeed, we find, conspicuous with red-letter honours, the names of Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Cranmer, Tyndale, and various other famous reformers; but the great majority of the names call up no very vivid associations. Indeed, there are cases in which the bewildered martyrologist himself, unable to obtain the names of the sufferers, fills up the line as he does on the 18th May: "a blind boy and another with him," or, as on the 4th December, "an old man of Buckinghamshire."

Its inaccuracies.

Nor was the "Kalender," after all, by any means accurate as to facts. Some of those called martyrs met with no violent death; among others, Wycliffe, who, moreover, has the 2nd January assigned to him, when the day of his death was the 31st December. But in several cases the names in the "Kalender" are names only, the persons named are quite unknown, and nothing is said in the history itself to enable us to identify them. Putting such cases aside, when we go over the list of known martyrs, it certainly is a strange medley, considering the object for which the work was written. The truth which dispelled the errors of Romanism one might have expected to be harmonious in itself; but Lollards and Lutherans, and Zwinglians and Calvinists, are here glorified as if witnesses to a common faith against the corruptions of Popery. Men who strongly upheld and men who strongly denied the Real Presence in the sacrament are here found in the same holy company; to which are also admitted some who were only charged with sorcery and witchcraft, such as Roger Onley (or Bolingbroke), dignified as a red-letter martyr, and Eleanor Cobham, the mistress (or wife) of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who, as she only suffered public penance, is designated, not a martyr, but a "confessor." The fact that she was condemned for something by the Church of Rome seems to have been

sufficient in Foxe's eyes to give her a place in the "Kalender." Leaving out, however, the less reputable in the list, the new saints were undoubtedly characterised by discrepancies in their belief which Foxe himself was most anxious to conceal; and we shall see that the heretics of Mary's time were anxious to conceal them also.

Foxe's aim, then, was to discredit what he called "the Pope's Church" by glorifying all who had suffered for their opposition to it during the two centuries before he wrote. Opposition to Rome was to him almost a proof of sanctity; and whoever had suffered for his antagonism to the Pope or the Romish clergy was for that very reason exalted to the dignity of saint or martyr. Nay more, a man might be guilty of simple felony and hanged as a felon by civil law; yet if his object had been only by some outrage to attack superstition he was sure of a good place in Foxe's narrative. Take, for example, the following case, which, be it remembered, occurred at a time when images in churches were always reverenced, and the Government had done nothing to discredit their use:—

> In the year of our Lord 1532 there was an idol named the Rood of Dovercourt, whereunto was much and great resort of people: for at that time there was great rumour blown abroad amongst the ignorant sort, that the power of the idol of Dovercourt was so great that no man had power to shut the church door where he stood; and therefore they let the church door, both night and day, continually stand open, for the more credit unto their blind rumour. This once being conceived in the heads of the vulgar sort, seemed a great marvel unto many men; but to many again, whom God had blessed with His Spirit, it was greatly suspected, especially unto these whose names here follow: as Robert King of Dedham, Robert Debnam of Eastbergholt, Nicholas Marsh of Dedham, and Robert Gardner of Dedham, whose consciences were sore burdened to see the honour and power of the Almighty living God so to be blasphemed by such an idol. Wherefore they were moved by the Spirit of God to travel

out of Dedham in a wondrous goodly night, both hard frost and fair moonshine, although the night before and the night after were exceeding foul and rainy. It was from the town of Dedham to the place where the filthy rood stood ten miles. Notwithstanding, they were so willing in that their enterprise that they went these ten miles without pain, and found the church door open, according to the blind talk of the ignorant people; for there durst no unfaithful body shut it. This happened well for their purpose, for they found the idol, which had as much power to keep the door shut as to keep it open; and for proof thereof they took the idol from his shrine, and carried him a quarter of a mile from the place where he stood without any resistance of the said idol. Whereupon they struck fire with a flint-stone, and suddenly set him on fire, who burned out so brim that he lighted them homeward one good mile of the ten.

This done, there went a great talk abroad that they should have great riches in that place, but it was very untrue; for it was not their thought or enterprise, as they themselves afterwards confessed; for there was nothing taken away but his coat, his shoes, and the tapers. The tapers did help to burn him, the shoes they had again, and the coat one Sir Thomas Rose did burn; but they had neither penny, halfpenny, gold, groat, nor jewel.

Notwithstanding, three of them were afterwards indicted of felony, and hanged in chains within half a year after, or thereabouts. Robert King was hanged in Dedham at Burchet; Robert Debnam was hanged at Cataway-Causey; Nicholas Marsh was hanged at Dovercourt: which three persons, through the Spirit of God, at their death, did more edify the people in godly learning than all the sermons that had been preached there a long time before.

The fourth man of this company, named Robert Gardner, escaped their hands and fled, albeit he was cruelly sought for to have had the like death. But the living Lord preserved him; to whom be all honour and glory, world without end![1]

It was from a letter of Robert Gardner himself, as Foxe informs us, that the particulars of this account were derived; so we may take them as authenticated by an accomplice who gloried in the deed, and with whose action Foxe sympathised. Now, hanging in

[1] Foxe, iv. 706-7.

chains is, no doubt, a severe punishment. But what are we to think of the historian who sympathises with the criminals in a case like this, and declares that they were moved "by the Spirit of God"? If such a thing were done at this day in France or some other Roman Catholic country, even to a wayside crucifix, would the Protestant feeling of England sympathise with the perpetrators of such an outrage? And if, in a ruder age, hanging in chains was the legal punishment for such an offence, should we not say it was very well merited by any one who so deliberately violated the law and offended the religious sense of the community?

We thus perceive the spirit in which Foxe wrote: the lawlessness of a deed was nothing to him if the doer was animated by a just hatred of what he called idolatry. To violate law as a protest against idolatry was the act of a saint "moved by the Spirit of God," and to be hanged for it was martyrdom.

But how far does this vehement bigotry in the historian affect his view of facts? Does it not injure his credibility throughout? I certainly think we ought to be on our guard against the bias of a writer capable of taking such distorted views. At the same time there is one thing to be said, viz. that bigotry like this may be taken as very sincere; and an author who was at such pains to gather information, though he may have relied on doubtful authorities at times, ought not to be lightly suspected of wilfully perverting facts. Roman Catholic writers of his own and a later generation have openly accused him of lying, and the Jesuit Parsons, who was most incensed at him, made what he calls "A note of more than a hundred and twenty lies uttered by John Fox in less than three leaves of his Acts and Monuments." But the severity of that "Note" is considerably modified by the words immediately subjoined, although they are added with the view of strengthening the indictment still further.

Criticised severely by Parsons.

For the effect is this: "more than a hundred and twenty lies . . . and this in one kind only of perfidious dealing, in falsifying the opinions of Catholics touching divers chief points of their religion." The "Note," in fact, denounces a number of statements as false concerning the theological positions of Romanists, which it may be conceded that a mind like Foxe's was pretty sure to misinterpret. But it would be quite unprofitable to follow up this investigation, for we are not concerned here with theology of any school, and, if we were, we should be slow to reiterate the charge of lying on account of misstatements due to bias.

On the other hand, we are very much concerned to inquire how this bias of the martyrologist affected his view of the facts themselves, and how far his credulity was ready to accept stories that could not possibly have been true. I think there is no doubt that there were such cases. Take the following touching the poor sufferer, John Nicholson, otherwise called Lambert, who was burnt in Smithfield in the time of Henry VIII. after a trial before the King himself, and sentence pronounced upon him by Thomas Cromwell:—

Some of its statements incredible.

> Upon the day that was appointed for this holy martyr of God to suffer, he was brought out of the prison at eight o'clock in the morning unto the house of the lord Cromwell, and so carried into his inward chamber, where, it is reported of many, that Cromwell desired of him forgiveness for what he had done. There, at the last, Lambert, being admonished that the hour of his death was at hand, was greatly comforted and cheered; and being brought out of the chamber into the hall, he saluted the gentlemen, and sat down to breakfast with them, showing no manner of sadness or fear. When the breakfast was ended, he was carried straightway to the place of execution, where he should offer himself unto the Lord, a sacrifice of sweet savour, who is blessed in his saints, for ever and ever. Amen.[1]

[1] Foxe, v. 236.

This is very touching, and of course adds lustre to the halo round the head of this patient and magnanimous martyr. He forgave the Lord Cromwell; he was cheered by the intimation that the hour of his death was at hand, and sat down to breakfast with the gentlemen in Cromwell's hall, showing no manner of fear. But how came this condemned heretic, solemnly judged to death by authority of the King himself, to be conveyed to the house, and even into the inner chamber of the King's great minister, just before he suffered? It could only have been done by Cromwell's own direction; and if Cromwell, the ever busy tool of Henry VIII., occupied from morning till night with State affairs, actually caused him to be sent for that he might beg his pardon, he showed himself a wonderfully different person from that callous Cromwell who wrote down in his memoranda at what places the abbots of Glastonbury and Reading should be executed before they were even tried! But even if he had felt a touch of compassion for this particular victim (who indeed had been encouraged in his heresies by Cromwell's revolutionary Church policy),[1] how could Cromwell, the judge who actually pronounced sentence on him, have ever thought of asking his pardon for doing so? Such an action would have been a reflection upon the King himself and the justice of the whole proceedings; and it would have given a handle to Cromwell's enemies to say that he was in sympathy with sacramentaries and Anabaptists.[2]

[1] See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. XIII. part ii. No. 849 (2).

[2] Parsons points out another incredible circumstance; and if he is right that Newgate prison was the place of Lambert's confinement, it is certainly still more inconceivable that on a winter's morning, when people were assembled to see his execution at Smithfield, he should have been permitted "to make a walking vagary throughout all London to Bishopsgate" (near which Cromwell lived at Austin Friars) to have a conference with Cromwell (Parsons's *Three Conversions*, vol. iii. 194). Newgate is close to Smithfield, but to go thence to Austin Friars would have been to go first one mile eastward, and then the same mile westward again to execution. I know no warrant, however, for the statement that Lambert was confined in Newgate. Wriothesley's *Chronicle* states that on the 22nd November he "was drawn from the Bridge foot through London into Smithfield," where he was burnt.

Another instance of Foxe's credulity is really not a little ludicrous. At the end of his work he relates some examples "of the Lord's judgment and severity practised upon the cruel persecutors of His people," of which the following is undoubtedly the most remarkable. A good man of the name of Cooper was executed, according to Foxe, on a false charge of having uttered treasonable words, and one of the perjured witnesses against him was a certain Grimwood of Hitcham in Suffolk. What befell this Grimwood let Foxe tell in his own words:—

Strange story of Grimwood.

> In the harvest after, the said Grimwood of Hitcham . . . as he was in his labor stacking up a goff of corn, having his health, and fearing no peril, suddenly his bowels fell out of his body, and immediately most miserably he died. Such was the terrible judgment of God, etc.[1]

This is the most extraordinary end ever made by a human being, and surely ought to have been verified by an inquest, for doctors of later times have heard of nothing like it. But an inquest there could hardly have been, for the story had a very curious sequel. About a quarter of a century later, when Foxe's book, having been commended by Convocation, was frequently placed for popular use in churches, and supplied parsons at times with matter for their discourses, a parson named Prit, newly instituted to the cure of Hitcham, was preaching against perjury, of which he gave the story from Foxe as a terrible example. But it so happened that Grimwood, who, in fact, was not dead even then, was among the parson's hearers, and, indignant at being thus slandered, he brought an action against the clergyman for calling him a perjured person. But the case being tried at assizes, the Chief Justice directed the jury to acquit the parson, as he had only reported a story without malice.

[1] Foxe, viii. 631.

Thus it appears that Foxe had credulously accepted and embodied in his history a tale which was not only false in itself, but accompanied by details which were absolutely against common sense; and yet the facts, as he related them, conveyed unjust imputations upon living men. For Grimwood felt that he had no reason to be ashamed of himself, even in the days of Queen Elizabeth. He had never borne false witness; the man whom he had accused deserved all that he had said of him. And this is a point to which it is necessary to give some attention in detail, for it must affect to some extent our opinion of Foxe's honesty. Anybody can make a mistake, though it may require special credulity to be deluded in some ways; but there is no excuse for continuing to propagate error after once it has been pointed out. Foxe had, indeed, rectified a similar error once; for Grimwood was not the only man alive at the time he wrote whose death as a martyr he had commemorated in his book. He had unluckily, in his first edition, consigned to the flames in 1543 John Marbeck, the celebrated organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, who was pardoned, and lived long after, continuing still to play the organ in St. George's Chapel. So in his second edition he confessed his error, though it is clear he felt uncomfortable under the ridicule it had excited. But he never confessed his error about Grimwood; and this was the less excusable, because he had been warned, even on the first publication of the book, that the story should have been suppressed as altogether erroneous in other matters besides the fate of Grimwood.

Let us first hear Foxe's narrative of the case in which Grimwood is said to have sworn away a man's life by perjury:—

John Cooper, of the age of forty-four years, dwelling at Wattisham, in the county of Suffolk, being by science a carpenter, a man of very honest report and a good house-

keeper, a harbourer of strangers that travailed for conscience, and one that favored religion and those that were religious, was of honest conversation and good life, hating all popish and papistical trash.

This man being at home in his house, there came unto him one William Fenning, a serving man dwelling in the said town of Wattisham; and understanding that the said Cooper had a couple of fair bullocks, did desire to buy them of him; which Cooper told him that he was loth to sell them, for that he had brought them up for his own use, and if he should sell them, he then must be compelled to buy others; and that he would not do.

When Fenning saw he could not get them (for he had often essayed the matter), he said he would sit as much in his light; and so departed, and went and accused him of high treason. The words Cooper was charged with were these: How he should pray if God would not take away Queen Mary, that then he should wish the Devil would take her away. Of these words did this Fenning charge him before Sir Henry Doiel, knight (unto whom he was carried by Master Timperley, of Hintlesham in Suffolk, and one Grimwood of Lawshall, constable); which words Cooper flatly denied, and said he never spake them. But that could not help.

Notwithstanding, he was arraigned therefor at Bury before Sir Clement Higham, at a Lent assize; and there this Fenning brought two naughty men that witnessed the speaking of the foresaid words, whose names were Richard White of Wattisham, and Grimwood of Hitcham, in the said county of Suffolk, whose testimonies were received as truth, although this good man John Cooper had said what he could to declare himself innocent therein, but to no purpose, God knoweth. For his life was determined, as in the end appeared by Sir Clement Higham's words, who said he should not escape, for an example to all heretics; as, indeed, he thoroughly performed. For immediately he was judged to be hanged, drawn and quartered, which was executed upon him very shortly after, to the great grief of many a good heart. Here good Cooper is bereft of his life, and leaves behind him alive his wife and nine children, with goods and cattle to the value of three hundred marks, the which substance was all taken away by the said Sir Henry Doile, sheriff, but his wife and poor children left to the wide world in their clothes, and suffered not to enjoy one penny of that they had sore labored for,

unless they made friends to buy it with money of the said sheriff, so cruel and greedy were he and his officers, upon such things as were there left.[1]

There is the whole story, at least all that we are told took place before the extraordinary death of Grimwood. There are three paragraphs yet relating to the matter, of which we are bound also to take notice, as Prebendary Townsend insists that the circumstances related in all the seven paragraphs "are omitted by the uncandid authors who are anxious to condemn the martyrologist, and who only mention the contradiction to his narrative." I, for my part, wish all those circumstances to be duly weighed, but I will take the above four paragraphs first.

It will be seen at once that in the interpretation of this story everything depends on the character attributed to John Cooper. We know, of course, what Foxe meant by "one that favoured religion," even if he had not added "hating all popish and papistical trash." But we are not concerned here with John Cooper's party feelings about religion if it was true, as we are told, that he "was of honest conversation and good life." Unfortunately, however, this was denied by at least one of his neighbours—a certain William Rushbroke, who must have had good means of knowing. Foxe had got all his information in the matter through a man named William Punt, whom Rushbroke held seriously to blame for circulating it in a paper even before the appearance of Foxe's book; and immediately after the publication of the book he wrote a letter to a friend at Ipswich about it in these words:—

My humble duty remembered, etc.—This day, according to my promise, I have talked with those which, as I judge, can best certify the truth of the matter which is reported pertaineth to Couper; of which, according as I have said,

[1] Foxe, viii. 630-31.

I would it had never been written; for if everyman might be judged a martyr which then was punished for rebellious words, we should have many martyrs. Of all men, therefore, William Punt was much to blame, for I told him more than two years past that his paper which contained that report was untrue, which now, as it was then written, is put in print; in which report are committed these faults following:—First, that Couper was no such man that ought in commendation to be named in that book. Secondly, whereas Whyte is named to be a false witness, he witnessed truly. Thirdly, Grymward is unjustly reported to be a witness, much more to be a false witness. Fourthly, that which is said by the just judgment of God to come upon the said Grymward is as true as the rest. Last of all, Couper he is valued more than he is worth; for these were his goods:—Item, ten milch kine at 30 sh., summa £15. Item, seven bullocks at 18 sh., summa £6, 6s. Item, six calves at 5s., 30s. Item, 6 horses, price together £7. Item, in household stuff, £3. Item, a new cart, price £2. Item, 19 acres of wheat at 20s., sm. £19. Item, 18 acres of ground ready tilled to sow with barley, thought worth at the harvest next, £4, 10s. In like manner Bullimonge land, 10 acres, 33s. 4d. Item, in corn and hay in the barn, it is not known how much. So the sum of that which is written and summed aforesaid, with 12 porklings at 28d. the piece (sm. 28s.), cometh to £61, 7s. 4d.

This was certified me by the late wife of the said Couper, of whom I asked what she thought in conscience of her said late husband concerning religion. To which she answered that she trusted no man was able to say that he hindered any of those that were persecuted, and in all that time there never resorted to his house more than two which were persecuted, of which the one was a turncoat priest's wife, etc. Furthermore, I have an aunt named the Widow Rayner, who indeed to her power harboured and ministered to the afflicted, dwelling within two arrow-shots of the said Couper. She trusted him as ill as she did any other in the town [and] good hope of his amendment there was but little in him, for in his mad rage he could not rule himself; also he was a great blasphemer. I understand that my friend Punt hath willed the late wife of the said Couper to come to him to Ipswich. I pray you move him to be silent in this case, or else require Mr. Foxe not to give credit to his writing or report in his behalf; and tell him that I required you to do

so. Haste remembereth no reverence. Pardon my simple and hasty scribbling. At Byldeston this last day of April Ao. 1563.—Your poorest friend,

WILL'M RUSSHBROKE.

To his assured friend, Mr. Walker, preacher of God's Word, these be given, at the Widow Bordinge's in Ipswich, in haste, haste.[1]

This letter, it will be observed, is dated at Bildeston, which is only three or four miles from Hitcham in Suffolk, where Grimwood, or, as the writer calls him Grymward, resided; and if the writer deserves any credit, it is perfectly clear (1), that Cooper was not at all such a character as Foxe represented him; (2), that he actually deserved his fate according to the law that then existed; (3), that neither Grimwood nor White gave false testimony against him, as Foxe says they did, Grimwood, indeed, having given none at all; and (4) as to the alleged "judgment" on Grimwood, it was "as true as the rest"—in other words, pure fiction. Rushbroke, it is true, does not add that Grimwood was still alive, though we know that he really was so; perhaps he may have left the neighbourhood for a time, and Rushbroke could not pointedly say so. But apparently Rushbroke was not much concerned about Grimwood, who he says was not really a witness in the case at all; his main object was to correct the misstatements about Cooper, and it was enough to say that he knew the report about Grimwood's fate was equally erroneous.

But I think there is little doubt that, even before this letter was written, Foxe had been already informed that he had made some serious mistakes in this part of his narrative, and had applied to his original informant, William Punt, to know if he could assuredly verify the statements. For the following letter, written by Punt a few days before

[1] Harl. MS. 416 f. 174, Brit. Mus.

Rushbroke's, seems clearly to be a reply to some such application :—

Grace and peace.

Mr. Foxe. — Being at Ipswich about this matter, Mr. Kelke and Mr. Walker was to Cambridge. Then went I to Mr. Sutton, the minister who was with you and me at the report of the story and doeth remember it very well, every part thereof as now it is imprinted. Notwithstanding, he and I with another honest man went to the parties again and read the story unto them; who boldly affirmed the same to be true, and will so confess before any man. There was two of them that so verified, and both twenty years of age apiece. Therefore this day Mr. Candish is looked for at Ipswich, and also the wife of Coper, who with the children we mind to bring before Mr. Candish and others, and to make a true certificate thereof with their hands as witnesses of their words, and then send it up to you with speed. Thus much of this. Also Mr. Sutton, who hath and will take great pains (for only he laboured with me), desireth me to write to you to make means to one Mr. Washborne, my lord and Keeper's man (who delivereth the presentations granted by my L. Keeper), and to require of him a presentation for this said Mr. Sutton of the benefice of Chelmondiston in Suffolk by this token that they wrung each other by the little finger; which presentation is all paid for, save his fee, which is 3s. 4d., and that shall this bearer deliver you. Mr. Hunt may do this, no man better; and if you can entreat Mr. Hunt to get the giving of this fee of 3s. 4d. given to Mr. Sutton you shall do well, for he have (*sic*) deserved it in his pains about this matter I have in hand. Also he compounded the 7 of April in Mr. Godfrey's office for the first fruits of that benefice of Chelmondiston and discharged everything due for the same; out of which office he should have had a writing that should notify he had compounded for his fruits, but he had none given him, neither for ignorance, he did not require it, and therefore would fain have one to go thither and demand it in his name, and that the presentation and it might be sent him to Ipswich with speed. Now, for Mr. Godfrey's office, your brother John might do it, no man better. When you send these things, send it to Mr. Parkhurst dwelling in the Buss[hop's] house to be delivered to Mr. Sutton. Thus I end, and leave you under the Lord

Jesus' keeping. Amen. Shortly you shall hear from me again by the grace of Christ. Pray for me and my labours. From Ipswich, the 23d of April.—Yours as ever,

WM. PUNT.

This is the third day I have lain in Ipswich about this matter. The Lord give me to end it, as I trust he will.

Addressed: To my loving and very great friend, Mr. Foxe, in the Duke of Norfolk's house, lying by Aldgate at Crichurch.[1]

From this letter it would appear that the story originally came from two young men, and was reported to Foxe himself in the presence of Punt and of a clergyman of the name of Sutton, in the business of whose preferment to a Suffolk living Punt appears to be very much interested, and in whose behalf he wishes Foxe to do some small service, as for a man who had taken and would take great pains in connection with Foxe's labours. But the main point is that Punt wishes to assure Foxe that the story can be vouched for. He and Mr. Sutton and another honest man had gone to "the parties" again—that is to say, to the two young men from whom the story came, and they stood to their word, saying that they would vouch for it before any man. That, however, was not unnatural, as it appears by the other letter that Punt had put the story in writing as soon as he got it, very likely at their dictation, and it concerned their credit to maintain that it was correct. But they were only young men of twenty, and when they first spread the report could not have been more than eighteen; and whether they were really in a position to know the facts, or were persons at all to be trusted, we have no information. We do not even know their names. Mr. Punt hoped also to get assurance of some points from Cooper's widow and children, whom he had sent for to come to Ipswich to be examined by a Mr. Candish; but

[1] Harl. MS. 416 f. 122.

how much was made out in this way we have no evidence to show.

And now for the three remaining paragraphs in Foxe bearing on this affair. It should hardly be necessary, however, to quote them all in full. At all events, let us first see what Prebendary Townsend wished to make of them. These are his words :—

In the *fifth paragraph* is the assertion that this last named Grimwood died suddenly and miserably.

The portion of that paragraph relating to his alleged very peculiar death has been quoted already.

The *sixth paragraph* appeals to Fenning as being still alive when the account of Grimwood's death was published; an appeal which was certainly no proof of falsehood,—more especially as both in the *sixth* and *seventh paragraphs* this very Fenning is described as a wicked man, for whose repentance Foxe offers up a prayer.[1]

As Foxe paints Cooper's character better than it was, he may have painted Fenning's worse; but in any case, the fact that Fenning was still alive, if it be no proof of the falsehood of what Foxe wrote, is certainly no proof of its truth, when its truth, as we know, was challenged by other people. However, we will give those sixth and seventh paragraphs in full, just as they stand in Foxe :—

This foresaid Fenning, who was the procurer of this tyranny against him, is yet alive, and is now a minister; which if he be, I pray God he may so repent that fact that he may declare himself hereafter such a one as may well answer to his vocation accordingly.

But since we have heard that he is no changeling, but continueth still in his wickedness, and therefore presented before the worshipful Master Humerston, esquire and justice of the peace and quorum, for that he had talk with some of his friends (as he thought) how many honest women (to their great infamy) were in the parish of Wenhaston, wherein he

[1] Foxe, vol. i. 374.

is now vicar, resident. Wherefore he was commanded the next Sunday ensuing to ask all the parish forgiveness upon his knees openly in service time; which he did in Wenhaston church aforesaid. And moreover the above said Fenning is reported to be more like a shifter than a minister.[1]

The scandal contained in this last paragraph is certainly not very well expressed. The first sentence, in fact, is scarcely grammatical, and does not strictly convey the sense which the writer, no doubt, intended. But that is a point that does not concern us much. What is to be noted here is this. Fenning, the serving man of Wattisham, has taken holy orders and become Vicar of Wenhaston, a village in the same county of Suffolk, but about forty miles from Hitcham. He has not repented his conduct towards Cooper, doubtless because there was nothing in it to repent. But he *has* repented, it seems, some indiscreet, and, perhaps, a little too sweeping remarks that he had made about the women in his own parish, for which he was compelled to ask their forgiveness in church. There is nothing in this surely, however badly we may think of it, to give us confidence in Foxe's accuracy either about Cooper or about Grimwood.

But Prebendary Townsend had a key to the matter which would show that Foxe was right after all,—not perhaps about that extraordinary kind of death that overtook Grimwood (a point which he discreetly passes over in silence), but in the fact that Grimwood really did meet with a very sudden death in the fields. "How so," the reader may well ask, "when he brought an action many years afterwards against a parson for slander?" Well, Prebendary Townsend can explain it. There were two Grimwoods—so he had discovered from "the impartial and accurate Strype." And so Strype himself had been informed by "a very careful inquirer whose name he mentions." And this inquirer had found from "a very authentic

[1] Foxe, vol. viii. p. 631.

paper" that the judgment recorded by Foxe did not overtake the Grimwood who sued the minister, but "another of the same name, both Christian and surname, as was well known afterwards." Really, this is very wonderful!—not, indeed, that there should have been two Grimwoods of the same Christian name and surname, but that one of them should have sued a clergyman for a scandal that manifestly did not apply to himself. Rushbroke, indeed, denies that Grimwood had given any evidence against Cooper at all; so it might have been another man. But Foxe had distinctly stated that Grimwood of Hitcham did so, and there seems to have been no ambiguity about the person or about the charge, which Rushbroke had contemptuously declared to be as true as the rest of the story.

Prebendary Townsend seems to think the authority of "the impartial and accurate Strype" sufficient to make all further investigation needless. And Strype, indeed, was a very industrious author, to whom we are immensely indebted; but as to his accuracy, it was not, by any means, unfailing. All Prebendary Townsend's attempt to bolster up Foxe's authority in this case is built upon a previous attempt to do so by Strype, who most conscientiously went to the original sources and perused the two letters above quoted, of the greater part of which he gives the substance almost in the very words of the letters themselves. But he makes some curious mistakes in the use of this testimony, which really seem to turn the evidence quite the other way. In the first place, he gives the substance of the first half of Rushbroke's letter, down to the valuation of Cooper's goods, mostly in the words of the original. Then, following up with information which he read in Punt's letter, he begins a new paragraph with the words: "*When all this was understood by Mr. Foxe he came himself to Ipswich to inform himself*

truly about it." This sentence is quoted by Prebendary Townsend in italics; in which type also he reproduces another sentence of Strype's at the end of his condensation of Punt's letter, in these words: "*I have set down all this at length, to show what diligence and care was used that no falsehood might be obtruded upon the readers, and Foxe and his friends' readiness to correct any mistakes that might happen.*"[1]

Unhappily the letters, carefully read, bear no such evidence of Foxe's scrupulous accuracy. Rushbroke's letter, which was Strype's first source of information, is dated the 30th April 1563. Punt's letter, from which the further information was derived, is dated on the 23rd of that same month of April—just seven days earlier. It begins, as Strype read it, and as I confess I read it at first myself:—"Mr. Foxe being at Ipswich about this matter."

If that were the correct reading, it was certainly not "when all this was understood" (*i.e.* the things contained in the later letter of the 30th) "by Mr. Foxe," that he came to Ipswich, for he must have been there before the 23rd. But it is clear that the words ought to be read with the punctuation, "Mr. Foxe, being at Ipswich about this matter,"—signifying, of course, that *the writer* had gone to Ipswich about the matter, not Mr. Foxe, to whom the letter is actually addressed as residing in the Duke of Norfolk's house in London at Creechurch by Aldgate. This, indeed, might have been presumed, even if there had been no address; for it would have been rather an unusual thing if the letter had begun with nothing like a vocative by way of salutation. What misled Strype further, no doubt, was the expression, "your brother John," in the latter part of the letter, which suggested that it was not addressed to John Foxe, the martyrologist himself, but to a brother of

[1] Foxe, i. 375, quoting from Strype's *Annals*, i. 379, 380.

his in the Duke of Norfolk's house. No doubt this is conceivable; but as we know not otherwise what brothers Foxe had, or what their names were, and as it was not an uncommon thing in that day for two brothers in a family to bear the same Christian name, internal evidence, surely, suggests strongly that the letter must have been written to the martyrologist himself—especially as it is a known fact that he really did reside at this time in the Duke of Norfolk's house by Aldgate. Moreover, the letter is found in a volume of Foxe's own correspondence. But if this be so, Mr. Foxe did *not* "come himself to Ipswich to inform himself truly," though it must be admitted that he set on foot some inquiries, provoked, as we have shown they must have been, by charges of inaccuracy made before the date of Rushbroke's letter. But whatever may have been the result of those inquiries, it is certain that Foxe made no correction of the story in subsequent editions; and whether this was altogether honest seems rather open to question.

Briefly, however, let us sum up those facts which are past contradiction. Foxe stated in his book that Grimwood, and another named White, had sworn away the life of an honest man named Cooper, and that Grimwood had afterwards met with a horrible (and quite impossible) kind of death in the fields. Immediately after the book was published he was informed by more than one friend that these statements were erroneous: that Cooper was not an honest man, but a felon; that White had sworn truly against him, not falsely; and that Grimwood, who had really not sworn against him at all, had certainly not come to any such sudden or violent end as Foxe had written. On this Foxe applied to his original informant Punt, who had circulated the statements some time before, and he applied to *his* original informants, two young men who are not named, and the young men stood to

what they had said; but it is evident from Rushbroke's letter at the time that Punt was expected to try and make out a case in favour of his own credibility. Finally, more than twenty years[1] later, Grimwood himself, in his own parish church, hearing this story from Foxe delivered from the pulpit by a new parson, protested not only that he was alive, but that he was grossly slandered by what was said of him. Yet Foxe had meanwhile gone on printing edition after edition, and actually four editions of the work had appeared before this final refutation of the story of Grimwood's fate.[2] The fifth edition of the book was published after Foxe's death, and retained the story, of course, as every edition has done since.

Story of Bishop Morgan.

After this, we probably know how to estimate a few other things of the like kind, as when we are told that "Morgan, Bishop of St. David's, sitting upon the condemnation of the blessed martyr, Bishop Ferrar, and unjustly usurping his room, not long after was stricken by God's hand after such a strange sort that his meat would not go down, but rise and pick up again, sometimes at his mouth, sometimes blown out at his nose, most horrible to behold; and so he continued till his death. Where note, moreover, that when Master Leyson, being then sheriff at Bishop Ferrar's burning, had fet away the cattle of the said bishop from his servant's house called Matthew Harbottle, into his own custody, the cattle coming into the sheriff's ground, divers of them would never eat meat, but lay bellowing and roaring, and so died."[3] A fair collection of stories like these will be found in illustration of what the reader is expected to regard as God's judgments upon popish persecutors. As to Bishop Morgan, he died at Wolvercote, not far

[1] The occurrence is dated in the twenty-seventh year of Queen Elizabeth (A.D. 1584-5).

[2] The fourth edition was published in 1583, and Foxe died in 1587.

[3] Foxe, viii. 629.

from Oxford; but Anthony Wood could hear of no tradition of the misery of his latter days.[1]

Foxe's delusions.

Foxe, indeed, perhaps from overstudy, became the victim of delusions even about himself; and after his death we find it related of him as notorious "that he imagined himself sometimes to be an urinal of glass, sometimes a crowing cock, and other like fancies."[2] For such things he deserves our sincere compassion; but we must take them certainly as evidence of a mind not very well fitted to grasp the immense subject that he had taken in hand, or to prove by accurate and impartial narration how from about A.D. 1000, from which he dates "the loosing out of Satan," and a four hundred years' reign of Antichrist, the Church was overwhelmed with corruptions which almost completely extinguished "both doctrine and sincerity of life," till at last a Reformation began which had been constantly growing till his day, "about the space of two hundred and fourscore years."[3] Such was the theme that he had proposed to himself, and of the manner of its execution as a whole it would be superfluous to speak. No one, I believe, is prepared to vindicate his account of the Albigenses or of the Waldenses, or any other part of the bulky history, before he comes to relate the separate stories of a multitude of different sufferers in his own day. And, however touching may be these detailed and particular anecdotes, he certainly fails entirely to show what it was his object all along to set forth,—that professors of a pure gospel, with an unvarying standard of doctrine, had been consistently fighting for nearly two centuries against the errors and corruptions of Rome.

Far from this, many of the very saints and martyrs whom he put in his "Kalender" would have denounced each other as heretics; and many of those "true

[1] See Wood's *Athenæ*, ii. 789 (ed. 1843).
[2] Parsons's *Three Conversions*, iii. 397.
[3] Foxe, i. 5.

gospel" men of his own day, as he and they knew perfectly well, though they strove to conceal the fact, were at issue among themselves about very important doctrines. Yet criticism of the book in England, from the favour with which it was upheld, was attended with peculiar difficulties; and the first book in which some of its statements were subjected to serious examination was published at Antwerp in the year 1566. It was entitled, *Dialogi Sex contra Summi Pontificatûs, Monasticæ vitæ, Sanctorum, sacrarum imaginum oppugnatores et pseudo-martyres*, and bore the name of Alan Cope, an English refugee, upon the title-page. Cope, however, was not the real author, but only the editor of the book; for it was written by one who was then a prisoner in the Tower, Dr. Nicholas Harpsfield, lately Archdeacon of Canterbury, deprived for refusing the oath of supremacy. The disguised authorship was indicated under a mystery by ten capital letters printed at the end of the volume: "A.H.L.N.H.E.V.E.A.C.," which those who knew the secret could interpret, "Auctor hujus libri Nicholaus Harpesfeldus; eum vero edidit Alanus Copus." We can imagine with what difficulty the composition of such a work in a State prison must have been carried on. Only the Sixth Dialogue was devoted to Foxe and his alleged Martyrs; but a good many of the remarks were forcible enough. Foxe's blunder, for instance, in classing the musician Marbeck among the sufferers in 1543 is thus satirically touched upon :—

Harpsfield's "Dialogues."

> "Do not think," says Irenæus, one of the two speakers in the Dialogue, "that I am unjust towards the pseudomartyrs, and that I wish to lessen or extenuate these their miraculous endurings; for I certainly cannot doubt their truth if that indeed be true which Foxe relates, that we have lately had another Polycarp in England, upon whom either the fire had no power, or who, his whole body having been reduced to ashes, sprang to life again more wonderfully than Lazarus.

For behold, you have John Marbeck, the organist at Windsor, in the year 1543 and 28th July, 'undergoing martyrdom at the fire with cheerful constancy' (I quote the words of Foxe). But he is yet living, and chaunts as beautifully, and plays the organ as skilfully, at Windsor as he was wont to do."[1]

The jest was a good one, but after all it was scarcely fair; for Foxe had found out his error here and corrected it in a list of errata before the book was published. He had confused the names of Filmer and Marbeck, and set each in the place of the other; and the rectification of the error or errors, in his *Faultes and Oversightes Escaped*, would scarcely have shown any one without reference to the text how much was involved in them. Harpsfield is also severe about the visions which Foxe records to have been seen by several of his martyrs, and which he expects the faithful to believe—all the while he derides the visions of saints acknowledged by the Catholic Church; and certainly the critic succeeds in showing that superstition was not all on one side. Strange, moreover, that on one of these martyrs, while praying in the midst of the flames, at Brentford, there should have appeared "in his breast a marvellous white cross, as white as paper, the breadth whereof extended from the one shoulder to the other, the length being as much as the breadth. The compass thereof in every place was as broad as a hand. This cross appeared so long till he fell down flat to the fire." Singular as such an appearance must have been, it was doubly so when crosses were so generally detested by martyrs of the kind Foxe commended. Yet the historian vouches for the occurrence in these words: "Master Dean aforesaid did see it with his eyes, and he that saw did justify it, and himself declared it to me with his own mouth, anno 1561, October 14th."[2] Not-

[1] Quoted by Townsend in his introductory remarks to Foxe's Works, i. 177-8. The original Latin is given in a footnote.

[2] Foxe, viii. 481-2.

withstanding this verification, however, the passage was suppressed in later editions. Was there a mistake, after all, about what "Master Dean" had told him? Or was Foxe, perhaps, a little troubled about Harpsfield's criticisms? Or was there some other inscrutable blunder?—for really it is rather difficult to find the previous reference to "Master Dean aforesaid," or to say what dean it meant.

One further instance of Harpsfield's criticisms we may note before passing to other matters; for in this case, at least, there can be no doubt that Foxe modified his statements in consequence of them. In his Latin work published at Basel Foxe speaks of having been himself, when a boy, an eyewitness of the burning of one Cowbridge at Oxford, though he does not exactly set him forth as one of the most noble of martyrs. He expresses himself cautiously on the subject of Cowbridge's heresies, which he virtually admits were indefensible, but only speaks of the cruelty of the regents of the divinity school, Dr. Smith and Dr. Cotes, suggesting that they drove him mad by imprisonment in Bocardo when a milder treatment might have brought him back to the faith. This was surely, as Harpsfield remarks, defaming the authorities of his own university in a way altogether shameful, for the Church never treated the vagaries of a wandering mind as fit subjects for punishment. Harpsfield, moreover, rectifies the date of Cowbridge's burning, which Foxe in his Latin work had set down as 1536, and in his English as 1539. It was really 1538, and Foxe was wrong also about the month and day in which Cowbridge was set down in his "Kalender." But we may note that the date was five years after Henry VIII. had thrown off the Pope, and the sentence was given by his Chancellor, Lord Audeley, one of the new way of thinking in religion; so it was really for the enormities of the heresies themselves—the utter blasphemies, in fact, which

Story of Cowbridge.

they contained, not because they were anti-papal—that he was condemned. In his English work, however, Foxe is somewhat bolder, and represents Cowbridge as a "meek lamb of Christ" falsely accused. Curiously enough, he says nothing here about having witnessed his sufferings. But in the first edition he introduces something new, describing him as a man come of a good family, which, from Wycliffe's time, "had been always favorers of the gospel and addict to the setting forth thereof in the English tongue." Though a layman, he had gone about discharging the office of a priest, in which capacity, as Foxe informs us, he had administered the sacraments, "and had converted many unto the truth." That is to say, on false pretences he had won people's confidence, and then seduced them to Lollardy, besides being guilty of what was always looked upon as the very abominable crime of administering the sacrament without being in Holy Orders. Further, he had maintained the heretical doctrine that every priest had as much power as a bishop. All this Foxe frankly tells about him, and seems to consider it quite meritorious. The reader, surely, will not be surprised that Cowbridge was committed to prison. Nor, perhaps, would it be very astonishing if, as we are told, he lost his wits there through lack of sleep, and uttered a number of other wild things, for which he was put to the flames.

Now, in commenting upon this, Harpsfield had little occasion to go beyond Foxe's own account of the matter to show that Cowbridge had fully earned his fate according to the state of law and opinion which governed in that age; and he accordingly lets the reader see that to depict such a man as a martyr for a purer faith was absolutely preposterous. Foxe evidently came to see this himself, and in his second edition he not only corrects the date of year, but goes back to the same treatment of the case which he had

given in his Latin work, except that he says nothing of his having himself witnessed Cowbridge's burning. He suppressed all that he had said in the first edition about Cowbridge's Wycliffite ancestry, and about his unlawful exercise of priestly functions. He suppressed also an extract containing one of the articles on which the unhappy man was impeached, and a paragraph in which it appeared that he was well treated for a time in prison, and his execution respited in the hope that he had come to a better state of mind. Neither was there any hint in this new version of the story that the man had been falsely accused, nor was he called, as before, a "meek lamb of Christ." The case was treated simply as one of great cruelty shown to a man who was insane from the beginning, and without a word being said by Foxe himself in the text of his edition as to the charges made against him. It is only said: "If his articles were so horrible, and read as Cope in his *Dialogues* doth declare them, then was he, in my judgment, more fit to be sent to Bedlam than to be had to the fire in Smithfield to be burned. For what reason is it to require reason of a creature mad or unreasonable, or to make heresy of the words of a senseless man, not knowing what he affirmeth?"

I think we cannot call this perfectly candid treatment of a case, when the sufferer is represented, first only as a man cruelly dealt with for some extravagant utterances, then as an innocent martyr falsely accused, and next as a man who was not innocent, but whose atrocious blasphemies ought to have shown him to be a subject for humane keeping in Bedlam rather than for burning in Smithfield.[1] Humane treatment, no

[1] In Cattley's edition of Foxe, v. 251-53, the two inconsistent stories are strangely pieced together, just that the reader may not lose a word of all that Foxe wrote. The first brief paragraph on p. 251 is from the second edition, but the paragraph which immediately follows it in that edition comes in at the bottom of p. 252, after three paragraphs interpolated from the first edition; the effect of which is simply to destroy the sequence of the narrative and confound the policy of Foxe himself in the second edition,

doubt, would have been better if the spirit of the times had allowed it; but the one thing Foxe was bent on proving was that the authorities were both cruel and unjust, and if he could not make this out by one statement of the facts, he could suppress and alter facts to make it out another way.

After this work of Harpsfield's put forth by Alan Cope there was, for nearly forty years, comparatively little published in confutation of Foxe's statements, and that little was both composed and published abroad, without the advantages which would have come of free search for information, if such a thing could have been permitted, in England itself. Yet the statements of Foxe touching the Guernsey martyrs became the subject of a remarkable controversy with Harding, a deprived English clergyman at Louvain, once a disciple of the New Learning himself, who first attempted to show their true significance; and Bishop Jewel coming to the rescue of Foxe, who likewise defended himself in the second edition of his book, prolonged the dispute through numerous publications. Of this controversy I shall have to speak hereafter, if I am spared to continue the present work so far. But no very complete exposure of Foxe took place till some years after his death, when Parsons the Jesuit, in his *Three Conversions of England*, went over the whole ground, particularly exposing the absurdities of Foxe's "Kalender" and the false colouring of many facts in his narrative; discussing also the real characters of a number of his martyrs, and, it must be added, pursuing the sufferers generally with an *odium theologicum* which certainly weakens the effect of an otherwise valuable book. It will be an endeavour, on my part, in later chapters, to weigh, as fairly as

Controversy with Harding.

which was to hush up and profess uncertainty about the charges against Cowbridge, which his first edition had shown to be grave enough in some things. It is not altogether wonderful that Dr. Maitland called Cattley's "the comic edition" of Foxe.

I can, the statements both of Foxe and of his critics as regards those who suffered for the New Learning.

Meanwhile, having said so much about Foxe's defects, I should be sorry to end this chapter without a word or two more about his real merits. I should have greatly preferred to begin with them, but it was absolutely necessary, in the first place, to consider the aim and object of the writer, and consequently to discuss his bias. It would be unjust to say, however, that the work did not possess very real merits, to which its extraordinary success was largely due. That its authority has been strangely over-estimated for a period of three centuries and more—that its influence has coloured and prejudiced the views which we have taken of the Reformation, even to the present day—are all the more reasons for recognising what was really praiseworthy in the author's zeal and industry. There is no doubt that he was perfectly sincere. Driven, as he might be, after publication, into corners from which he tried to escape in irregular and unworthy fashions, he certainly had addressed himself to the task in the first instance with sincere enthusiasm and a full intention to state nothing that was not true. Among the numerous documents in his book there may, possibly, be one or two that are spurious; but it is not to be supposed that he connived at forgery. Where the originals are attainable it does not appear that he ever tampered with the text of one of them; indeed, one might say that he is generally a very careful editor. Where he only gives, or professes to give, the substance of documents in his own words, he is, undoubtedly, less to be trusted; but there is no reason for imputing his misrepresentations to anything but carelessness. Parsons, writing abroad, was altogether wrong in his surmise that Foxe had destroyed many documents upon which his statements are founded. The episcopal registers from which so much of the story was

drawn are to this day available for consultation, and sometimes furnish valuable corrections of particular incidents. But no doubt a good many original documents are lost; and it is all the more important, where we cannot go to the fountain-head for our information, that we should study this indispensable historian with a due appreciation alike of his merits and of his weaknesses. For the most part, when we take account of his bias he is tolerably clear and intelligible.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH AND HERETICS BEFORE THE ACT OF SUPREMACY

It is time now to enter upon a more minute examination of the action of those forces which in the reign of Henry VIII. originated the severance between England and the See of Rome, widened the breach still further under Edward VI., kept alive the elements of disorder under Mary, and under Elizabeth caused a still more definite separation, finally made irremediable by the bull of excommunication against her fulminated by Pope Pius V. For it was Rome, not England, that dealt the last blow, and made the mischief irreparable. We have already noted the different phases of religion and Church government which prevailed under the first three sovereigns; but it is necessary to illustrate these phases more in detail in order to appreciate the elements which went to make up the final settlement. I must therefore ask the reader's indulgence if I repeat occasionally things that I have said before in order to bring out their significance a little more fully.

I have already shown that the old Lollard spirit, which though it had not exactly died out, had sunk very low in the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign, received a new accession of strength from the labours of Tyndale in the translation of the New Testament. Wycliffe's translation of the Bible had been made

from the Latin; it had been disseminated in MS., and copies, no doubt, were pretty numerous. Indeed, there is no distinct evidence that anything was done to suppress them, even if the translation was objected to as much as Tyndale's was. But Tyndale translated the New Testament from the original Greek, and his work was multiplied by an agency from which Wycliffe's had received no help —the power of the printing press. To suppress such a work was not easy. The attempt was actually made by Bishop Tunstall to buy up a whole edition and burn it; but the result was only to put money into Tyndale's pocket to print more copies than ever. Yet the translation was decried as mischievous and heretical, tending throughout by its phraseology to disparage Church authority, as indeed there could be no doubt that such was the intention of its author. What sort of a Church Tyndale would have built up, if he had had the power, out of the ruins of the existing system is not altogether clear. One thing only is certain: that his mind was not at all in harmony with the Church system then established.

Tyndale's New Testament.

To speak the whole truth, indeed, about Tyndale seems almost an offence to feelings which deserve the deepest respect and consideration. The whole English-speaking world is largely indebted to him for his vigorous and lucid translation of the Scriptures, which, so far as it extended, became ultimately, with really rather few alterations, the text of the familiar Bible of King James. Tyndale indeed was, for his day, a fair scholar in Greek and Hebrew, and he applied all his learning most conscientiously to the great object he had at heart, of putting the source and fountain of all divinity within the reach even of the least educated readers, that they might form their own views of the Gospel independently of any teaching from professional theologians. That this was a really dangerous design founded on a view of Scrip-

ture which was in itself superstitious does not diminish our admiration for the enthusiasm with which he embarked on the great project, and the perseverance with which he carried it through. Sir Thomas More wrote against his pernicious principles; his Testament was denounced both by the bishops and by royal proclamation, and was persistently ill spoken of. Yet the only effectual way of counteracting its errors (since it could not be suppressed) was to replace it by a sound translation; and the question how this should be done hung many years before Convocation. Not that it was by any means true, as prejudiced writers said, that the bishops did nothing in the matter, but what they did was never allowed to see the light. They divided among themselves the labour of translating the different books of the New Testament, and Bishop Gardiner actually completed a version, not now known to exist even in MS.,[1] of the Gospels of Luke and John. But a translation of the whole Bible largely derived from Tyndale's work was foisted on the public by Cromwell in 1537, and it was intended to compel the clergy to purchase it. After Cromwell's death it was examined by Convocation, which protested strongly against its being retained without very material revision. But the King took the matter out of the hands of Convocation, and the same translation was issued anew with all its faults. The problem, in truth, even if Convocation had been allowed to settle it, was beset by no small difficulties; for thoughtful study of the text of any part of the Scriptures only reveals the inadequacy of all language to express fully the deep truths of inspiration. It was impossible even for the original writers of the New Testament to put into classical Greek ideas which were familiar among the Hebrews; they used Hebrew idioms and even in-

[1] The probability is that it was burned when the rebels under Wyatt ravaged his house and destroyed his library.

vented new Greek words. Then, when both the Old and the New Testaments were translated into Latin, hosts of words and phrases were employed in ways quite unknown to the pagan writers of Rome. The Church required a vocabulary and phraseology of her own; and when these had become sacred by usage in Latin it was equally difficult to find English substitutes for them, the use of which did not seem at first like profanation. Any translation, in fact, of such a book as the Bible can only convey the meaning of the original with the help of comment and traditional interpretation; and when a new translation has been familiarised by sufficient use, it makes the atmosphere in which it lives. Even the positive errors it may contain are no serious bar to the reception of a large amount of valuable and far-reaching truth. But, though much is gained by traditional interpretation, it is a drawback to the study of Holy Scripture to this day, that men too easily satisfy themselves with translations as if they could be perfect substitutes for the original.[1]

His principle of interpretation.

Now Tyndale not only believed thoroughly in the importance of having the Scriptures in English for general use, but he also believed thoroughly in his own way of translating and of understanding them. He took up the Lollard view that the meaning of Scripture could not be hidden except to those who were lost. The schoolmen had spoken of four different ways of understanding the sense of Scripture. There

[1] The Revised Version of the New Testament, at least (for I will not presume to speak about the Old), is almost expressly calculated to encourage this superstition. Of course it is a great deal more accurate than King James's version, especially as regards the niceties of Greek grammar. But it is of really far inferior value for general use, for it only gives half the significance of many words, where by varying translations the older version gives a great deal more. It would have been much more valuable to have had two or three new translations as different from each other as possible, in parallel columns. For instance, the two different translations of the same Greek words which are actually found in different passages of King James's version: "Thy faith hath saved thee" and "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke vii. 50; viii. 48) might be placed side by side in each case, for both meanings are contained in the original.

was the literal or historical sense, the tropological sense, the allegorical sense, and the anagogical sense. The literal sense, he said, the Pope had taken clean away. He had partly locked it up with false keys and partly driven men from it by violence. The other three might all be called allegorical senses, though the allegory proper applied to faith, the tropological sense to ethics, and the anagogical to hope or things above. Tyndale, however, would have none of these distinctions. "Thou shalt understand," he wrote, "that the Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way."[1] He admitted, indeed, that the Scripture did use "proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently,—as in English we borrow words and sentences of one thing and apply them unto another, and give them new significations."[2] This is rather an enlarged view of the words "literal sense," admitting that there is allegory, but contending that the allegorical sense is the true literal one. It is clear, however, from Tyndale's argument that he considered the sense of Scripture to be always definite, and that it always ought to be attainable. Moreover he, like the Lollards, considered it a duty in the individual Christian to study the Scriptures in order to find this definite sense; and accordingly he preserved a positive mistranslation of one text, which unfortunately has been handed down from the days of Wycliffe to those of our authorised Bible of King James. For in John v. 39 we read to this day

[1] The metaphors are rather curious. Cleaving to an anchor cannot be recommended as a safe process if the ship be in any danger. Nor does an anchor direct us so as to prevent our going out of the way.

[2] Tyndale's *Doctrinal Treatises* (Parker Soc.), pp. 303-4.

(except in the Revised Version), "Search the Scriptures," as if our Lord declared that to be a duty, whereas the verb is plainly in the indicative mood;[1] and our Lord, speaking to the learned of his own nation, tells them, "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me."

Now, what was to be expected when an enthusiast possessed of such ideas, and encouraged by at least one sympathising London merchant,[2] who financed his great undertaking, published in a foreign country an English translation of the whole New Testament, and got it smuggled into England in considerable numbers? We have been accustomed for nearly four centuries to the phraseology of Tyndale's translation, with some of its more flagrant faults corrected; and we do not see, in what remains unaltered, very much of the peculiar philosophy which animated Tyndale himself. But Tyndale's philosophy was of a very disturbing kind, which in a practical age like our own would have been met, not by burning either his books or himself, nor even by fierce diatribes against him like those of Sir Thomas More, but by quiet irony and exposure. For, in truth, in his utter antagonism to Church authority Tyndale, besides propagating opinions which went to maintain uncontrolled despotism in the State, does occasionally verge in other matters on the ridiculous. His great book entitled *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, from which I have already made one extract, propounds a social theory which was not only revolutionary as regards the existing state of things, but was quite as unpractical in some of its aspects as Plato's Republic. In his preface to the reader he urges him not to be dismayed, though it was made treason to the King

His theory of social life.

[1] The form of the imperative, it is true, would be the same as that of the indicative, but there cannot be a doubt, in this case, which of the two is intended.

[2] Humphrey Monmouth.

or breach of the peace to read the Word of his soul's health; for such persecution was only a proof that it was the true Word of God. He inveighs against the Schoolmen, who cannot agree among themselves. He insists that Scripture is the only touchstone of doctrine, and ridicules the idea that Scripture cannot be understood without philosophy. Particularly he denounces the idea that the study of Aristotle can be any help to that of Scripture. And therewith he sets forth his own philosophy—in order, as the prologue shows, to refute a charge made by the clergy that the study of "God's Word" caused insurrection and disobedience to heads and governors.

Well, how does he refute it? His little treatise, as he assures the reader, contains "all obedience that is of God." First, obedience is due from children to parents—a principle which he pushes so far that he maintains the full right of parents, or even guardians, to dispose of them in marriage, and further on declares that a couple are not really man and wife who have married without the consent "of their elders." Where he found this principle in Scripture it would be difficult to say. It was pure feudalism—especially that expression about "elders," which was clearly intended to comprise guardians; whereas it was really one of the great merits of the Church that it asserted, not always unsuccessfully, freedom of contract in this very sacred matter against the abominable tyranny of feudalism. Next, obedience was due from wives to husbands, and from servants to masters. No one had a right to withdraw himself from any of these kinds of obedience by shaving himself in order to become a monk, friar, or priest; that was taking "the mark of the beast." Obedience, moreover, was due to kings and rulers; it was not lawful for a Christian to resist his prince, even if he were under the Turk. A king was, in this world, without law, and might do right or wrong just as he pleased. He was account-

able only to God, but his subjects must be obedient to him. This was God's ordinance, from which men were not exempted by professing themselves monks or friars; even popes and bishops were subject to the swords of emperors and kings if they broke the laws. Moreover, even a tyrant was a blessing to men; far better that a nation should be controlled by a single will than that the king himself should be ruled by others, in addition, perhaps, to being ruled by his own lusts which he could not resist, and which the "wily tyranny" of those who ruled him, of course, would not oppose. But princes incurred damnation who gave liberty to the spiritualty to sin unpunished, and not only to sin unpunished themselves, but to open sanctuaries and allow felons the benefit of clergy on their reading a "neck-verse" to save them from civil punishment.

Concurrently with all this scheme of civil and social obedience, he is careful to denounce at every turn the kind of obedience on which the Church insisted. He considers that clergymen who are sworn to cardinals and bishops may lawfully break their ordination vows, for they sinned in making them. He laments that clergymen rule in the counsels of princes—not in the least considering that princes themselves chose them as councillors in preference generally to less educated or less acute laymen. He asks if it is not shameful and monstrous "that no man should be found able to govern a worldly kingdom save bishops and prelates that have forsaken the world, and are taken out of the world and appointed to preach the kingdom of God." He is ironical on the subject of clerical judgeships in a way that really deserves quotation. First quoting from his own translation of 1 Peter v. 2, 3:— His sarcasms.

> Taking the oversight of them, not as though ye were compelled, but willingly; not for desire of filthy lucre, but of a good mind; not as though ye were lords over the parishes"—

he comments as follows :—

Over the parishes, quoth he? O Peter, Peter, thou wast too long a fisher; thou wast never brought up at the Arches, neither wast Master of the Rolls, nor yet Chancellor of England. They are not content to reign over king and emperor and the whole earth, but challenge authority also in heaven and in hell. It is not enough for them to reign over all that is quick, but have created them a purgatory, to reign also over the dead, and to have one kingdom more than God himself hath.[1]

Then the greed of the clergy! Besides tithes they have got well-nigh a third of all the realm in their hands,—lands of cathedrals, colleges, chantries and free chapels, whose endowments they stick to, though the house fall into decay. Yet how many chaplains do gentlemen keep at their own cost? Then, in singing for souls, proving testaments, taking mortuaries, — what exactions! Even the poorest at Easter must give somewhat on receiving the sacrament. And what swarms of begging friars! "The parson sheareth, the vicar shareth, the parish priest polleth, the friar scrapeth, and the pardoner pareth; we lack but a butcher to pull off the skin."[2] But the ascendency of clerical power over all Europe is denounced in the choicest phrases :—

The emperor and kings are nothing nowadays, but even hangmen unto the Pope and bishops, to kill whomsoever they condemn without any more ado; as Pilate was unto the scribes and Pharisees and the high bishops to hang Christ. For as these prelates answered Pilate, when he asked what he had done, "If he were not an evil-doer we would not have brought him unto thee"; as who should say, "We are too holy to do anything amiss, thou mayest believe us well enough"; yea, and "His blood on our heads," said they; "kill him hardly, we will bear the charge, our souls for thine. We have also a law by which he ought to die, for he calleth himself God's Son." Even so say our prelates, "He ought to die by our laws, he speaketh against the Church."[3]

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[1] Tyndale's *Doctrinal Treatises*, 235 (Parker Soc.).
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 236-8.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 242.

The climax in things social and political is reached when discussing the subject of confession :—

> This is their hold; thereby know they all secrets; thereby mock they all men, and all men's wives; and beguile knight and squire, lord and king, and betray all realms. The bishops with the Pope have a certain conspiration and secret treason against the whole world; and by confession know they what kings and emperors think. If aught be against them, do they never so evil, then move they their captives to war and to fight, and give them pardons to slay whom they will have taken out of the way. They have with falsehood taken from all kings and emperors their right and duties, which now they call their freedoms, liberties, and privileges; and have perverted the ordinances that God left in the world; and have made every king swear to defend their falsehood against their own selves; so that now, if any man preach God's word truly, and show the freedom and liberty of the soul which we have in Christ, or intend to restore the kings again unto their duties and right, and to the room and authority which they have of God, and of shadows to make them kings indeed, and to put the world in his order again; then the kings deliver their swords and authority unto the hypocrites, to slay him. So drunken are they with the wine of the whore.[1]

These are but a selection out of many passages full of the same virulence. The book aimed at nothing less than a complete subversion of the whole social system then prevailing; and it was surely not too much for Sir Thomas More to call it Tyndale's "mad book of Obedience." But, mad as it was, it was not a mere pamphlet indicative only of a transient fit of lunacy; for he followed it up two years later by another book in which the cardinal principles of a new-fangled religion were more fully exemplified in their political application. As he had lamented in *The Obedience* that clergymen should rule in the counsels of princes, so he shows more explicitly in his later work, *The Practyse of Prelates*, how disastrous the results of that fatal principle have been. What moved him to write this is shown in the very

His censure of prelates.

[1] *Doctrinal Treatises*, pp. 281-2.

title-page, which, when the work was first printed, bore underneath the name of the book itself the words, "Whether the Kinges Grace may be separated from his quene because she was his brother's wyfe." Tyndale, unlike all the other English Reformers, was, it may be said to his credit, entirely against Henry VIII.'s divorce. He was not led on the paths of heresy by mere sycophancy, or belief that the King could do no wrong; and yet he acted much on the same principle, and threw the blame of the King's wrongdoing entirely on those objectionable "prelates" by whom he was surrounded. For in this book, after a very absurd quasi-historical review of the misdeeds of prelates from the days of Charlemagne, he comes particularly to the misdeeds of Wolsey, in recounting which he is equally ingenious in misinterpreting and inventing facts. Passing over his nonsensical account of the greater part of the Cardinal's career, how his overweening ambition and covetousness betrayed the interests of his country for the exaltation of the Holy See and his own profit, how he was bribed by French gold to make England French, and so forth, we come to this explanation of the history of the King's divorce. If the Cardinal could have succeeded in his efforts "to pluck us from the Emperor and to join us unto France,—to make France strong enough to match the Emperor, and to keep him down, that the Pope might reign a god alone and do what pleaseth him without controlling of any overseer,"—why, then, Queen Katharine might have been queen yet; aye, even if she had not been the King's wife. But it was to be feared that she and her daughter would "have given his Grace better counsel for the realm" —that is to say, in favour of the Emperor; so she must be unqueened. Wolsey, therefore, through the Bishop of Lincoln (Longland), a man of his own promotion, who was the King's confessor, inspired the King with the idea that the Queen was not his

His opposition to Henry VIII.'s divorce.

wife—at least so "the saying was," for here Tyndale guards his statement, though he means, of course, that it shall take full effect, and tried to marry Henry "to the King's sister of France"; and "the Cardinal's doctors laid their heads together to seek subtle arguments and riddles to prove his divorcement."

That was the beginning of the business, according to Tyndale. But it should be interesting to know what arguments he himself sets up against these "subtle arguments and riddles." For though the Pope himself was proof against them and refused absolutely Henry's demand in the end, we must remember that the King's plea for a divorce was founded on Scripture; and a man like Tyndale, who founded the whole of morality and duty upon Scripture, was particularly bound to discuss the scriptural argument. And here was a difficulty; for the Mosaic law seemed at first sight to favour either side. In Leviticus xviii. 16 was a distinct prohibition of the act of taking a brother's wife; but in Deut. xxv. 5 this act was not only permitted, but commanded when a deceased brother had no children. What was the solution of this? He presumed those who favoured the divorce would say that the prohibition was a part of natural law independent of the law of Moses, whereas the injunction was only part of the Mosaic "law of ceremonies" which was abrogated when Christ came. If it were a ceremony, then it was a sign, and must have some signification which he defied anybody to point out. Moreover, there was no ceremony of Moses which might not be lawfully kept as an indifferent thing. A Christian might eat the Easter lamb every year without offence. If it was lawful under the Mosaic law to marry a brother's wife it must be lawful still, though it may no longer be a duty; whereas the prohibitive text in Leviticus must surely apply only to taking a brother's wife when the brother was alive. After arguing thus at some length, Tyndale

His theory of prohibited degrees in matrimony.

goes on to discuss all the forbidden degrees, and to show the reason for prohibition in each case. "The daughter and daughter's daughter and son's daughter are a man's wife's flesh. The wife's mother and grandmother are persons to be obeyed (!), besides that the wife is your flesh. Now between a man and his wife's sister when she is dead, and his brother's wife when his brother is dead, is there no such cause as between these persons." I fear this argument escaped notice in the recent change in the marriage law when the same subject was discussed!

"And concerning the maid-children," he adds, "though they be under the obedience of their uncles, yet because, if any be married unto her uncle, she bideth in obedience still, *therefore it is not utterly forbidden.* And ensamples there be that maidens have married unto their uncles; which thing yet I could not have drawn into a common use without necessity, or for a commonwealth.

"And concerning the sister; she is of equal birth to her brother. It is to be feared, therefore, lest her obedience would be less to her brother than to a stranger. Then, note the grief of father and mother if they agreed not. Moreover, if he were an unkind husband, then had she double sorrow; first because he is unkind, and also because she hath lost the comfort of a brother. Then the familiar bringing up together. And besides all those and such like, there is yet another (which I think the chiefest of all), that the sending out of daughters into another kin, and receiving again into another kin, is the greatest cause of peace and unity that is in the world. And therefore the heathen people forbad that degree in marriage.

"Nevertheless, the marriage of the brother with the sister is not so grievous against the law of nature (thinketh me) as the degrees above rehearsed. And therefore it seemeth me that it might be dispensed with in certain cases and for divers considerations."[1]

It is really too monstrous. In his eagerness to vindicate the King's marriage with Katharine, accord-

[1] Tyndale's *Expositions* (Parker Soc.), pp. 319-31.

ing to Scripture and the law of nature, Tyndale positively would have allowed a union which even pagan nations regarded as incestuous—that of a man with his own sister. For him the *rationale* of the whole code of forbidden degrees was simply that peculiar doctrine of obedience contained in his own "mad book." A man must not marry his grandmother because she was one of those to whom "obedience" was due, and it is rather objectionable that he should marry his sister because, being of equal birth, "her obedience would be less to a brother than to a stranger"! In short, Tyndale was simply one of those wild theorists who would subdue everything in heaven and earth to a preconceived notion of his own, where he could not explain things in accordance with it.

This second book of his on *The Practice of Prelates* was naturally very offensive to Henry VIII., who was at that very time pursuing his great aim of a divorce through thick and thin, whereas before it came out he was greatly taken with the author's "mad book of Obedience" as an instrument that promised to be of much use to him. The madness of that book, indeed, was a sufficiently dangerous madness as tending to favour despotic power at a time when the King was beginning to feel that the moral restraints imposed upon him by the Church did really create a kind of "captivity" to which great princes ought not to be subjected. And it seems that the suggestions in that very book were a powerful encouragement to him in the scheme he was then maturing in his own mind how to throw off his captivity, not only to the bishops of his own realm, but even to the chief bishop in Christendom. For he is said to have become acquainted with the book through a smuggled copy found in the possession of one of Anne Boleyn's attendants, and to have declared, after looking into it, "This book is for me and all

kings to read."[1] But though it set forth very agreeable doctrine for him, it was inevitable that the clergy should look upon it with very different eyes. The old mediæval position of the Church, its complete autonomy and independence of the civil power, were matters on which loyal churchmen, of course, set the highest possible value, nor will any thoughtful man blame them for so doing. In truth, if they could have maintained that position much longer, they would have saved both the King and the nation from sinking into an abyss of crime, tyranny, and demoralisation. But, apart from this, an old-established order, political or religious, has a perfect right to defend itself against attacks like Tyndale's by every legitimate means in its power; and it is remarkable that while the King, preparing, for Anne Boleyn's sake, to throw off the Pope, was encouraging all sorts of heresy underhand, the clergy, undaunted, were prosecuting heresy during those years of tyranny with more than ordinary rigour, just that the King might not succeed in his manifest object of destroying the authority of the Church and respect for public morality.

Let it not be supposed that in what I have just said I mean by any means to insinuate that the Church, as a human society, was free from gross abuses and corruption. I have already shown that this was not the case by any means, and if it had been, the Church system would not have succumbed to lust and tyranny. But the immediate effect of the abolition of Papal jurisdiction in England was not a Reformation at all; it was grosser demoralisation than before. The Reformation, in fact, if we date it from the withdrawal of obedience to Rome, was really in the main an immoral movement, stimulated by abuses to which Rome itself had been a great deal too indulgent.

[1] *Narratives of the Reformation* (Camden Soc.), ed. Nichols, pp. 52-6; Wyatt's "Memoir of Anne Boleyn" in Cavendish's *Wolsey* (ed. 1825), 201-5.

For who can wonder that, when Rome had already relieved many kings and influential persons of inconvenient wives, Henry VIII. should have thought that he too might put in a claim to such an indulgence? There was Louis XII. of France, who had been fettered at his accession by conjugal ties to a daughter of Louis XI.; but political reasons made it very desirable to exchange her for another consort, and he obtained what he required from Pope Alexander VI. There was Henry's own sister Margaret, widow of James IV. of Scotland, who after that king's death had married the Earl of Angus, but a few years later began to think of a divorce, which at length, notwithstanding her brother's virtuous indignation, she succeeded in procuring at Rome. And there must have been many less distinguished cases, like that of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, in which, without application to the very highest authority, a man was able to indulge in a succession of wives, parting with each in turn on the ground of some flaw or other that nullified the marriage.

Strange matrimonial cases at Rome.

It was not, indeed, that the ecclesiastical courts by which such cases were settled were corrupt. We have no reason to believe that such courts were influenced by the political motives which influenced the parties. On the evidence brought before them they doubtless administered justice according to ecclesiastical law, finding that this or that marriage, celebrated before the Church, was really void *ab initio* owing to some long-concealed impediment. But it was too easy to dress up cases and intimidate women to give away their rights. If we may trust a Spanish author[1] who was in England in Henry VIII.'s time, Charles Brandon, after divorcing one wife, got perjured witnesses to release him from a second marriage in order that he might marry the King's sister Mary. And by what

[1] *Chronicle of King Henry VIII. of England.* Translated by Major Hume. See p. 135.

shameful artifices Henry himself endeavoured to prevent his own wife Katharine from getting her case fairly stated is sufficiently well known.

It is true Henry's demands on the Court of Rome were rather exorbitant, for he expected the Pope not only to set him free from his marriage with Katharine, but to grant him a dispensation to marry Anne Boleyn, with whom he had contracted precisely the same degree of affinity by the fact that he had seduced her sister. And it may even be a question whether he might not have succeeded, somehow or other, in the first object if he had not shown his hand to the Papal Court by pursuing the second too ardently. For he himself appears to have thought that the divorce would be a matter of no particular difficulty. What he endeavoured to do, without letting even Wolsey know what he was about (for on this subject he did not trust his far too loyal cardinal), was to obtain from the Pope a dispensation couched in general terms which would enable him, on the supposition that he was free from any matrimonial bond, to marry a woman related to him even in the first degree of affinity, removing every impediment, even though that affinity should be due to illicit connection. Here he quite outwitted himself, for the document he asked for was granted, with merely a few modifications in the draft; but it was a document which to be effective required that his freedom from present matrimony could be established before some competent tribunal.

Thus it will be seen that affinity, even in the first degree, did not present an insuperable obstacle to matrimony in the eyes of the Court of Rome. Affinity was, of course, an impediment, but affinity even in the first degree was an obstacle that could be removed by dispensation. The Court of Rome had already enabled King John III. of Portugal to marry his aunt, the sister of his stepmother, and no doubt dispensa-

tions could be easily issued for any case that was capable of being dispensed for. So if Henry VIII.'s problem had only been either to get his marriage with Katharine declared null, or, on the understanding that that marriage was null, to get leave as a bachelor to marry a woman like Anne Boleyn, whose sister he had seduced, it must be owned that there was at first a seeming likelihood of his attaining either object. But it was impossible to achieve both, especially against Katharine's opposition, without throwing over the authority of the Holy See altogether.[1]

But, while acknowledging the corruptions of the Church of Rome, we must not forget that she stood before the world of that day as the real guardian of high principles. However corrupt might be the lives of popes themselves, however unjustifiable their political actions often were, however serious the abuses that grew out of the quips and quiddities of a mere legal system of morality, there was no other external authority to which men looked as the final arbiter of what was right or wrong in doctrine or in practice. For what, indeed, did the Holy See exist but to set forth abstract principles of right and wrong, and endeavour to enforce them? It could only enforce them, no doubt, by suasion and by the power of the keys. When a sovereign went too far the Pope had the power to bind and to loose, to excommunicate or to absolve. Still these were but theoretical powers unless the world gave practical effect to them. And as for questions of matrimony, they could only come before the Court of Rome when doubts were raised as to the validity of an existing marriage; for divorce, strictly speaking, was not allowed by the Church of Rome at all. The Church maintained firmly that the

Judicial authority of the Court of Rome.

[1] The obstacle of affinity to his marriage with Anne Boleyn, though the fact was well enough known, of course was not even mentioned when the King took the matter into his own hand; but it was probably used in that secret examination by Cranmer when he declared the marriage null, just before her execution.

marriage tie was in itself indissoluble; it was simply by finding grounds of nullity that the Church was led to gratify lawless passions or political cravings for bigamy. And the impediments which could be found long after a marriage had been not only celebrated, but acknowledged and respected by the world, were as numerous as they were ingenious. Kinship or affinity, even in a remote degree, required a special dispensation, and it might afterwards be a question, as in Henry's case, whether the dispensation granted was in itself a valid document, or whether it were vitiated by some flaw not observed for many years. Such dispensations, and also the litigation raised about them, were a continual cause of resort to the Court of Rome; for kinship or affinity could be established on many grounds which the Protestant world disowns. Gossipred, for instance, or spiritual kinship, created by a father or mother, or some near relation having stood sponsor to one of the parties, established a distinct obstacle to matrimony unless that obstacle was removed by a dispensation.

But, of course, when Rome was called upon to declare a marriage null, it was for the party who sought the divorce to show by what legal impediment the ostensible marriage had been vitiated from the first; and justice equally required that the opposite party (of course almost always the wife) should have freedom to state her case and prove that the obstacle was unreal. If the wife acquiesced, unless intimidation could be distinctly proved, the marriage was pretty easily annulled. Henry VIII. tried at first to prevent Katharine stating her case at all, but he was unsuccessful. Katharine, no doubt, had been his brother's wife, at least before the world she had certainly been so, though the marriage, as Henry himself was well aware, had never been consummated. Still, the impediment had been removed by dispensations, of the validity of which no doubt was entertained

either in Spain or in England.[1] Henry VII., it is true, did speak about conscience in the case, but the question was then an open one whether to fulfil the marriage contract or not, and Henry VII. had various reasons for postponing it as long as possible, and keeping Ferdinand in doubt whether it would ever be accomplished. Henry VIII. himself, however, fulfilled it after his accession, and none of his Council, except Archbishop Warham, seems to have opposed his doing so. Certainly no one raised a question about the Pope's dispensing power after the accomplished fact, not even the King himself for a very long time, and when he first applied to Rome for a divorce it was not the dispensing power that he disputed. He only sought to make out that the dispensation granted by Julius II. was founded on inaccurate information, and was not large enough to cover the whole circumstances of the case. In this he found himself mistaken, and after having moved heaven and earth to get a cardinal sent from Rome to sit with Wolsey in a legatine court for the trial of the cause, he had for a time sorrowfully come to the conclusion that he was sure to be beaten, and must remain bound to Katharine. But Cranmer suggested an appeal to the universities, which would give him a pretext for acting without papal sanction at all, leaving the accomplished fact to be judged afterwards; and in addition to this Thomas Cromwell

[1] No doubt, certainly, was entertained either by Ferdinand of Aragon or by Henry VII. But Henry VIII., when he began his divorce suit, was not acquainted with all the documents that had been procured from Rome, or else had forgotten about one of them. A dispensation for the marriage in the form of a brief had first been sent by Julius II. to Spain for the satisfaction of Queen Isabella, then on her death-bed; and in this brief it was erroneously stated that the marriage had been consummated. Afterwards a bull was issued, antedated like the brief, and intended to supersede it. In this the statement that the marriage had been consummated was qualified by the word *forsan* ("perhaps"), the result of fuller information. The bull consequently was alone retained in the hands of the King of England, while the brief was left in those of the Spanish ambassador, who took it back to Spain; and Henry VIII., to his intense annoyance, was informed of its existence there just after he had got Campeggio over to England to try the cause. The marriage was far more fully dispensed for than he had imagined.

suggested the more potent weapon of royal supremacy, followed by statutes of treason to make the King's will respected.

How Henry VIII. was led to a separation from Rome.

Now, it was out of these suggestions, first of Cranmer and afterwards of Cromwell, that Henry VIII. framed for himself the policy which ended in separation from Rome. The world did not understand at first what he was about. After the suspension of the legatine court he himself apparently had relinquished his pursuit of a divorce as impracticable, and was anxious to assure Campeggio that he would always remain a true son of the Church.[1] His councillors were very much relieved, and the good impression became general when Sir Thomas More was appointed Lord Chancellor in Wolsey's room. For that More disliked the King's pursuit of a divorce might easily have been divined, even though he was doubtless careful to say nothing openly upon the subject. His high character convinced the public that the project was at an end. The truth was, however, that the King was still pursuing the matter, and hoped to win over Sir Thomas and make use of his services to promote it; for shortly after appointing him to that high post, although More had once already given him his opinion on the subject, he desired him again to think over it—intimating, however, that if More could not bring his mind into conformity with his own views, he would respect his conscientious objections and accept his services in other matters.[2] Notwithstanding this pledge, how-

[1] See Pole's *Apologia ad Cæsarem*, Poli Epp. i. 116, etc. In August 1529 Wolsey was instructed to arrange with Campeggio and the Queen's counsel that the King might not be cited to Rome, and he certainly succeeded in obtaining the required pledges from Campeggio. See *Letters and Papers, Hen. VIII.*, vol. iv. Nos. 5821 (comp. 5819, 5820) and 5864. The reader may also be referred to my article on the fall of Wolsey in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, vol. xiii., for some corrections of Pole's statements.

[2] See More's *English Works*, p. 1427. The passage occurs in a letter of More's to Cromwell, in which he relates fully the whole of his communications with the King upon the subject. This letter will also be found in

ever, More as Chancellor found that he was required in 1531 to lay before the House of Commons the opinions of the foreign universities in the King's favour; and even soon after his entry on office it was quite evident that in the Parliament of November 1529, a crusade had begun at the King's instigation against the old and hitherto undisputed liberties of the Church. Next year the King's duplicity was still more apparent; for while he was proclaiming lists of prohibited books and issuing orders that all persons of authority should swear to assist the bishops in suppressing heresy, the Bishop of Norwich declared that it was openly rumoured that the King himself favoured the circulation of heretical literature. More than this, it is quite clear that the King himself was anxious to use the services of several heretics, such as Tyndale, Constantine, and Dr. Barnes, for the express purpose of giving trouble to the Church, promising them his protection against his own Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, who was writing as hard as he could against the mischievous treatises put forth by both Tyndale and Barnes, and who would have committed either of them to confinement if ever he had set foot in England, but that Barnes had a royal licence to come back.

His encouragement of heretics.

Why the King took an interest in Tyndale we have already seen. He employed an agent to invite him to come to England; but he changed his mind after reading Tyndale's next book, *The Practice of Prelates*, in which, believing, no doubt, that the King's pursuit of a divorce was at an end, he laid the blame of having suggested that wicked proposal on Cardinal Wolsey and Bishop Longland of Lincoln, the King's confessor. By thus setting his face against the divorce he had made himself entirely unservice-

Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. i. App. No. 48; and a most important letter it is as an explanation both of More's opinions and of his conduct on this and other subjects.

able for the King's purpose, and Henry now sought to have him apprehended in Belgium and sent over for punishment as a seditious character.[1] Other heretics, however, were wiser in their generation and warmly approved the King's proceedings, seeing that he for his part found so much value in their services. And when Parliament in 1532 put forth, at the instigation of the Court, their celebrated supplication against the ordinaries complaining of the ill-will which was alleged to have lately arisen between the clergy and the laity, they were simply used by the King to stir up a fire raised largely by himself for his own purposes. The people were not really much excited; but the books of Tyndale, Frith, and Friar Barnes, which Sir Thomas More spent so much time in answering, had all come out in the course of a very few years; and the period corresponded pretty closely with that in which Henry VIII. was elaborating a great scheme to crush the liberties of the clergy.

Stages in the King's policy.

Let us note briefly the successive steps that he took in the matter, with their chronology.

1. First of all, Wolsey was deprived of the Chancellorship in October 1529, and Sir Thomas More was made Chancellor in his place — a step which, as just shown, made the world totally misinterpret his true intentions.

2. Parliament met next month, and immediately began to attack the old liberties of the clergy, passing various Acts against them.

3. In January 1531 the Convocation of Canterbury were informed that the whole clergy of England had incurred a *præmunire* by acknowledging Wolsey's legatine jurisdiction, and they felt that they must expiate their offence by an extortionate contribution. But even this, though voted, was not accepted till they had confessed the King to be "Supreme Head of the

[1] *Lett. and Papers, Hen. VIII.*, vol. v. Nos. 354, 869, 1554.

Church of England." This further demand aroused vehement opposition, and after long debate and a threatening message from the King it was only agreed to in silence when Archbishop Warham proposed to pass it with the qualification "as far as the law of Christ allows." Then the Convocation of York made a similar concession, but only after Bishop Tunstall of Durham (who presided, as the Archbishopric of York was then vacant) had protested to the King himself against the admission of such a title.

4. In March of the same year, just before the prorogation of Parliament, Sir Thomas More as Chancellor, acting under express orders, declared first to the Lords and afterwards to the Commons the King's scruples of conscience about his marriage, and the opinions he had obtained on the subject from universities.

5. In March 1532 various measures against the clergy were moved in Parliament; and the Commons, entirely at the suggestion of the Court, presented to the King their famous "supplication," complaining of the harshness of divers ordinaries in examining cases of heresy, and of the fact that the clergy made laws for themselves in Convocation. The King, with affected impartiality, submitted it to the bishops to be answered; and, receiving their answer in April, sent for the Speaker and a deputation of the Commons, to whom he delivered it for consideration, with an intimation that he thought they could hardly find it satisfactory. The clergy were compelled to make a further answer; and at length on May 16 they were driven to make their celebrated "submission," renouncing the power of enacting further canons, and submitting their existing constitutions for revision to a mixed lay and clerical tribunal to be afterwards constituted.

By these successive steps the King had succeeded

in making the clergy of England powerless to remonstrate with his proceedings just before he married Anne Boleyn, for he knew well enough his marriage with her was not approved by any but sycophants. It remained to take precautions against papal excommunication, which was sure to be fulminated as soon as that marriage was declared to the world. It is true his shameless desertion of his own wife and cohabitation with Anne had already exposed him to papal censure in three several briefs; but the Pope himself had been so much afraid of displeasing such a powerful king that, though he was unable to refuse the briefs to the imperial ambassador, he granted them only on condition that no use should be made of them till his nuncio in England had spoken with Henry. And Henry, for his part, made use of the nuncio's presence to persuade the world that he was still on the best of terms with the Holy See, all the while he was using agents at Rome, without appearing there himself, to spin out the proceedings in his own matrimonial cause before the Curia, preparing meanwhile to marry Anne Boleyn in secret, and to get a sentence of divorce from Katharine pronounced by Cranmer at home.

Nor was this all. He contrived to obtain the aid of the Holy See even in forging an instrument for the destruction of its own authority in England. For after the death of Archbishop Warham in August 1532 he at once determined on naming Cranmer, a chaplain of the Boleyn family,[1] as his successor at Canterbury;

Cranmer made Archbishop.

[1] A recent biographer of Cranmer, Dr. Mason (*Th. Cranmer*, p. 15, *note*), seems disposed to doubt that the future archbishop was chaplain to the Boleyn family. A still more recent one, Prof. Pollard (*Cranmer*, p. 42, *note*), goes farther and says, "There is no evidence that Cranmer was ever chaplain to Anne Boleyn or her father." Now the statement that he was chaplain to her father is distinctly made by the author of *Cranmer's Recantacyons* (p. 3); and also by Harpsfield, *Pretended Divorce*, p. 289. He presumably was so at the time he wrote to the Earl of Wiltshire about Pole's book, "much contrary to the King's purpose," in June 1531 (see Strype's *Cranmer*, App. No. 1). Moreover, Dr. Ortiz, writing to the Empress from Bologna on the 22nd Feb. 1533, says distinctly, on the authority of Chapuys, that the King had given the arch-

and not only obtained bulls from Rome for his promotion, but apparently got the Pope to grant them free from payment of the customary first-fruits. If so, this was the result of a curious manœuvre; for Parliament in 1532 had already, under pressure from the Court, passed an Act against the payment of any first-fruits (called technically *annates*) to Rome at all, but only five per cent on one year's value of each benefice. The two Houses, however, had only consented to this on the understanding that the Act was not to take ultimate effect till Easter following, or till the next Parliament; before which time they hoped the King would be able to come to an amicable understanding with the Papal Court on the subject of these intolerable exactions, and if so he might declare it by letters patent and thereby cancel the whole Act or any of its provisions. It was accordingly intimated to the authorities at Rome that it would be advisable to deal gently with Cranmer about his charges, especially his first-fruits[1]; and whether the hint was taken or not, it is certain that his bulls were sped. Equally certain it is that the concession, if made, was altogether fruitless; for though Parliament had passed the Act unwillingly, in 1534 they made "the restraint of annates" absolute by a new statute which also forbade altogether the presentation of bishops to the Pope or the reception of bulls, briefs, or palls from Rome, as the methods of election, investiture, and consecration for the future had already been laid down by statute. But Cranmer had obtained his bulls a year before, and he put his powers as Archbishop at once at the King's service, first to declare him free from his matrimonial tie to

bishopric of Canterbury to a chaplain "of this Anna," which had been taken ill by many (*Lett. and Papers*, vol. v. No. 178). Further, in his examination before Brookes in September 1555 he was taunted with having made an immoral compact with the King when he was Queen Anne's chaplain. He denied the compact, but did not deny having been Queen Anne's chaplain (Cranmer's *Remains*, p. 217, Parker Soc.).

[1] Bonner to Benet, Jan. 31, 1533, in *State Papers* and *Calendar*.

Katharine, and then to pronounce, by a like judicial sentence, after a secret inquiry, that he had been lawfully married to Anne Boleyn.

Thus the King at length gained the one great object for which he had been for years stimulating heresy at home, gagging the Church in his own kingdom, and compelling the clergy to renounce the power of making laws for their own guidance, while dallying with Rome to the last moment, and taking every advantage of the forbearance of the Holy See till the final step was taken which he knew must break off all relations with it. The fruit of this mode of procedure was simply that the clergy, while they had the power, did their very utmost to put down the disturbers of existing order, whatever influential support they might have to back them; and hence it is that prosecutions and burnings for heresy were far more rife during the five years just before the marriage with Anne Boleyn than they had been for many previous years, or were for many years after. In the vast majority of cases these prosecutions led to abjurations of heresy, of which there must have been hundreds at this time over all the country. But there were still some martyrdoms, and more than at ordinary periods. I have given in another work a very brief notice of nine victims[1] who were sent to

The clergy active while they had the power.

[1] I regret to find that in the work in question (*History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 128-9) I have given the reader to suppose that there are only nine martyrs mentioned by Foxe between the years 1530 and 1533. I have overlooked Davy Foster and Valentine Frese and his wife (mentioned in the "Kalender" under the 11th and 13th March), who suffered in 1531. The married couple were burned together at York. Where Davy Foster suffered I do not find stated, as he does not seem to be mentioned in the narrative. I have not omitted among the nine the name of Thomas Benet, but should have given some slight notice of him with the others. I refer the reader, however, to Foxe's own account of him, vol. v. pp. 18-25, from which it would appear that he was an acquaintance of Bilney's, and probably a priest, who, having married, went down to Devonshire to escape observation, but could not resist the temptation to affix secretly to the doors of Exeter Cathedral "certain scrolls of paper" with the words "the Pope is Antichrist; and we ought to worship God only and no saints." He was suspected when attending service in the Cathedral, but looked so demurely on his book that suspicion was disarmed for a time; and at last he seems to have betrayed himself by laughter when the unknown offender was solemnly cursed with

the stake between the years 1530 and 1533, showing that some of them, at least, even from the very little we know about them, must have been rather doubtful characters morally. But here it may be sufficient to speak of two who were undoubtedly the noblest of the lot; and I should be sorry to detract from the sympathy that is really due to them.

Bilney.

Thomas Bilney—"Little Bilney," as his friends called him from his diminutive stature—was burnt at Norwich in 1531, apparently on the 10th of March, the day assigned to him in Foxe's "Kalender."[1] His heresies were not against the mass—a subject on which he believed like other people.[2] But they were such as had brought him into trouble some years before, when he preached rather too unsparingly against the "pomp and pride" of the clergy, against images, pilgrimages, and praying to Saints as mediators. He even attacked the Papacy, saying that there had been no good Pope for five hundred years, and that history had verified in this matter the truth of what was written in the Apocalypse, that after a thousand years Satan would be let loose. He had denounced from the pulpit the erection of a new "idolatrous rood" at St. Magnus's Church in London. He disliked "dainty singing" in church, and called it "rather a mockery of God than otherwise." Add to

bell, book, and candle. After his apprehension he was visited by a friar named Gregory Basset, to whom he declared that the Pope's Church was Antichrist, and that bishops ought to exercise their functions under the prince as supreme governor under God. It is quite evident by what influence this man was emboldened in the very year that Convocation had been forced to acknowledge, with a slight qualification, the royal supremacy; but royal supremacy did not save him from the flames.

[1] I think this must be the correct date, though Foxe himself in his narrative (vol. iv. 652) assigns Saturday, St. Magnus's Day, as the date. St. Magnus's Day was the 19th August, which was undoubtedly a Saturday in 1531. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that Bilney was dead before the 16th August. See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. v. No. 372. There is, it is true, another feast of St. Magnus on the 16th April (also the day of the Translation of St. Alban), but it fell on Sunday in 1531.

[2] "As touching the Mass and Sacrament of the altar, as he never varied from himself, so likewise he never differed therein from the most gross Catholics" (Foxe, iv. 649).

this that in preaching at Willesden, a place to which there were many pilgrimages, he had made gross imputations as to the use to which some of the clergy had applied their offerings — imputations which, if they had been well founded, ought to have been made specific and inquired into. In 1527 he was called before Wolsey as Legate, charged with Lutheranism, which he was compelled to renounce. He acknowledged that Luther and his followers were heretics, and that the Catholic Church could not err in matters of faith. At the same time, while he made good answers to the majority of a set of thirty-four interrogatories addressed to him, there were a few to which his replies were unsatisfactory; among others one in which he confessed he did not believe that St. Peter, St. Paul, and Our Lady were in heaven. He and another preacher named Arthur were imprisoned in the Bishop of London's coalhouse —a place often used for the detention of heretics— and afterwards in the Tower, till they both abjured and bore fagots at Paul's Cross. His abjuration, however, we are told, gave him an uneasy conscience for a period of nearly two years, when, quitting Trinity Hall, Cambridge, he went down into Norfolk to preach again the doctrine which he had before abjured. There he gave an anchoress at Norwich a copy of Tyndale's Testament, and one of *The Obedience of a Christian Man*. On this he was apprehended, and, after examination, handed over to the secular arm and burnt as a relapsed heretic.[1]

Now, this was a man who, by Latimer's testimony, was so zealous of good works that he visited sick persons in their homes and prisoners in their cells. He and Latimer together saved the life of a poor woman accused unjustly by an unloving husband of having murdered her own child, Latimer himself

[1] I have mentioned only the salient points of his teaching, all of which have been taken from Foxe's account of him (iv. 623-56).

having an opportunity to procure her pardon by being called on to preach before the King. "Saint Bilney," as Latimer fondly called him in a sermon preached twenty-one years after his death towards the end of Edward VI.'s reign, was surely one who, whatever may have been his crotchets, deserved a better fate than that allotted to him. Latimer had special reason to remember him; for it so happened that Bilney, though a much younger man, was the first who seriously disturbed his repose in conventional orthodoxy. "I was as obstinate a papist," he said, "as any in England, insomuch that, when I should be made bachelor of divinity, my whole oration went against Philip Melancthon and against his opinions. Bilney heard me at that time, and I perceived that I was zealous without knowledge; and he came to me afterward in my study, and desired me, for God's sake, to hear his confession. I did so; and to say the truth, by his confession I learned more than before in many years. So from that time forward I began to smell the Word of God, and forsook the school doctors and such fooleries."[1] Such was the impression made upon good honest Latimer by Bilney's zeal and fervour.

Most sad, indeed, it is that a man with so much good in him should have come to such an end. But we must not overlook the fact that he courted it himself. To aid in the circulation of Tyndale's Testament, and, still more, of his *Obedience of a Christian Man*, was simply to disobey and endeavour to subvert the authority of the Church,—a thing which was considered criminal even in the case of a layman. But Bilney had taken vows of obedience to the Church as an ordained priest, and he could have no more right to complain of being prosecuted than

He was in a false position.

[1] *Latimer's Sermons*, pp. 334-5 (Parker Society). It is rather curious to hear Latimer, whom no one ever took for a theologian, speaking thus contemptuously of the whole body of the Schoolmen!

a servant who had betrayed his master's confidence. Moreover, his conduct as regards his abjuration was not entirely such as the above account, derived from Foxe, would lead us to suppose. When he came before Wolsey in 1527 he had exceptional favour shown him. Wolsey did not love prosecutions for heresy, and, for the sake of his university, accepted his own denial, and stopped the process on his merely taking oath that he would never from that time be a propagator of heresy, but always denounce it in preaching.[1] This solemn engagement, however, he broke, and was afterwards convicted on the evidence of more than a score of witnesses of having preached objectionable doctrine. That he was justly convicted according to the existing law there is no doubt at all; for he himself was learned in the law, and could not allege that he was denied any favour.[2] His preaching, in fact, clearly was such as created a sensation, and made him a favourite with heretics, one of whom said he would go twenty miles to hear him. He had been remonstrated with after one sermon on its dangerous tendencies, and had replied that he would preach there again, and prove what he had said by the old doctors of the Church.[3] So there was no difficulty in bringing home the charges against him. Yet on his conviction he for a long time refused to abjure, maintaining stoutly that the whole of the witnesses against him were perjured[4]—a plea that was utterly preposterous, for they were men of various ways of life (husbandmen, gentlemen, and "religious folk") whose characters were above suspicion. At last, though he still declined to confess

[1] More's "Dialogue," book iii. cap. 4, *Works*, p. 213. Here, and in several other parts of the "Dialogue," More is speaking of Bilney's case without naming him, Bilney being then alive. Afterwards, in the Preface to the "Confutation of Tyndale's Answer" (*Works*, p. 349), he mentions Bilney by name as the abjured heretic of whom he spoke in the "Dialogue."

[2] More's *Works*, p. 211.

[3] *Ib.*, pp. 213, 214.

[4] *Ib.*, pp. 214, 349.

his error, he felt it politic to abjure, and so great favour was shown him by his judges that they admitted him to penance without any confession of his fault. He wore the accustomed fagot on his shoulder to mark him as a convicted heretic. But again he proved perfidious; for after his abjuration he preached in various places secretly and also openly —an act of disobedience of which, for some time, his bishop took no notice, as no heresy was mentioned in connection with his preaching. But after he went to Norwich the evidences were abundant, and the result was that he was prosecuted for a relapse.

Now, whatever we may think of heresy laws, it is quite clear that Bilney grossly abused indulgence shown him, and was, moreover, guilty of very bad faith. This, indeed, was a common characteristic of heretics. They were evasive and perfidious. They escaped notice by going from place to place under different names, "sowing their cockle," as the phrase was. Speaking of one of the number in his "Dialogue," More is asked by the messenger what his name was. "Which of them?" said More in reply; "for he had more names than half a leaf can hold." "Where dwelleth he?" inquires the other. "Everywhere and nowhere," is the reply. "For he walked about as an apostle of the devil from shire to shire and town to town through the realm, and had in every diocese a diverse name; by reason whereof he did many years much harm or he could be found out."[1] We do not know that Bilney assumed false names to evade detection; but if, as Foxe says, his abjuration gave him an uneasy conscience for two years, the very fact that he had done wrong ought to have made him feel the less qualified to edify others by preaching unless he could summon courage openly to confess his sin. What he did was to repudiate heresy and say he would never preach it; then break the pledge, and,

His inconsistencies.

[1] More's *Works*, p. 213.

being prosecuted, abjure; then, after being released for a time, break his pledge once more. In fact, it is clear that some influence was used in his favour, and that, trusting to that influence, he exposed himself at last to the extreme penalty of a relapsed heretic whose case could not possibly be passed over if Church authority was to maintain itself at all.

Indeed, the mischief he had done, if heresy was mischievous, was altogether undeniable, for he had not only preached heresy, but perverted many others. It was to him that Latimer owed his conversion to principles considered altogether unsound. By him, too, Dr. Barnes had been encouraged to preach a bold sermon at Cambridge one Christmas Eve on the text, "Rejoice in the Lord alway," denying that there was any occasion for special observance of great feasts like that of the day following. It was also Bilney and Master Arthur whose influence first led John Lambert into a way of thinking for which he was burned in Smithfield many years after. Lambert, indeed, does not appear to have been, what he ultimately became, a "Sacramentary,"—that is to say, one who disbelieved in transubstantiation. He was "a mass priest in Norfolk." But, as it is stated that he owed his conversion to Bilney and Arthur (who both disowned having said anything against that doctrine), we must presume that his views underwent a change which carried him far beyond those of the teachers to whom it was originally due.[1]

"But was all this heresy mischievous?" asks the modern reader. "Was it not rather more enlightened than the teaching of the Church? Of course dishonesty is to be condemned, though the fear of burning must be taken as some palliation. But was it not important that the false principles and superstitions of the Church of Rome should be exposed by some one?" A careful study of what is really

[1] See Foxe, iv. 620.

known, or should be known, of Bilney's life and death does not lend weight to these suggestions. The following passage about him in More's "Dialogue" seems to have escaped the notice of Church historians hitherto, simply because the man referred to is not mentioned by name, though his identity is certain from More's own words elsewhere :—

More's account of him.

He was, as it was said, after that he fell from the study of the law (wherein he was a proctor and partly well learned) unto the study of the Scripture, he was, as I say, very fearful and scrupulous, and began at the first to fall into such a scrupulous holiness that he reckoned himself bounden so straitly to keep and observe the words of Christ after the very letter, that, because our Lord biddeth us when we will pray enter into our chamber and shut the door to us, he thought it therefore sin to say his service abroad, and alway would be sure to have his chamber door shut unto him while he said his matins. Which thing I indeed heard him once deny in an honorable presence, but I heard again another man more credible than twain of him (and if I had said than such ten I think I lied not), and one of his best proved friends avow it in his face for truth. Howbeit I tell you not this thing for any great hurt in the man; for it was more peevish and painful than evil and sinful. But surely men say that in conclusion, with the weariness of that superstitious fear and servile dread, he fell as far to the contrary, and under pretext of love and liberty waxed so drunk of the new must of lewd lightness of mind and vain gladness of heart which he took for spiritual consolation, that whatsoever himself listed to take for good, that thought he forthwith approved by God. And so framed himself a faith, framed himself a conscience, framed himself a devotion wherein him list, and wherein him liked he set himself at liberty.[1]

A man so superstitious, so ashamed of his own superstitions and so uncandid, was scarcely the man by his preaching to effect any reformation in the Church. More had heard it said of him,—and though he would not warrant the report was true, he felt that

[1] More's *Works*, pp. 207, 208. Comp. p. 349 in preface to *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*.

it did him no injustice,—that he used to say among those of his own sect, "Let us preach and set forth our way, and if we be accused, let us say we said not so, and yet some of them shall we win alway the while."[1] Even if he did not actually say this, More remarks, "His manner before his judges was as consonant as could be to that intent and purpose; for surely the effect of his defence was nothing else but against a well and plainly proved matter an obstinate shameless Nay."

Altogether, he seems to have been a strange compound of good and evil. But the best of a man is seen in the hour of trial; and the story of his last days has now to be considered. He is commonly set down as a Protestant martyr; but, as already stated, his belief about the mass was quite in accordance with Church standards. And this is admitted by Foxe himself, who says that on this subject he never differed "from the most gross Catholics."[2] Yet it is from Foxe, curiously enough, that the common account of him is derived, including the belief that he was a martyr for reform of the Church. Foxe, however, was ignorant of some points, and he would not believe the testimony of Sir Thomas More, who knew a good deal more about the matter than himself. In more than one part of his writings Sir Thomas tells us that Bilney again recanted his heresies before his death, was very penitent, received absolution, and at his own earnest request, though not without hesitation on the part of the Bishop of Norwich's Chancellor, was permitted to receive the sacrament; also that he read his recantation at the stake. To have admitted all this would have destroyed Bilney's claim to be a martyr altogether—especially the sort of martyr Foxe required as fit company for Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and other stout opponents of the Papacy. So, after relating

He was not a martyr, but was reconciled to the Church before he died.

[1] More's *Works*, p. 207.

[2] Foxe, iv. 649.

the facts already mentioned, he enters on a very lengthy defence (as he calls it) of Bilney against Sir Thomas More, insinuating at the outset that the author of *Utopia* was so much given to poetry that he could not state sober facts, and then, after subjecting his testimony to a great deal of flimsy criticism (such as finding inconsistency in the statements that some heard Bilney recant at the stake, and some did not), declaring roundly that More "juggled with truth," and even stated as a fact what "he knew, peradventure, to be false." Unfortunately for Foxe's credit, More was simply stating facts deposed before him as Lord Chancellor, and some of the depositions, at least, are extant at this very day.[1]

These depositions, moreover, reveal one fact of considerable interest. Bilney, before sentence was passed upon him by the spiritual judge, appealed to the King, whose title of Supreme Head of the Church had now been acknowledged (though with a material qualification) by the clergy, and, in accordance with that appeal, desired the Mayor of Norwich to withdraw him from the judge's jurisdiction. The Mayor, whose name was Edward Reed, seems to have been rather inclined to act as the prisoner desired him; at least, the doubt occurred to him whether he was not bound in duty to take Bilney as being the King's prisoner, and no longer the Bishop's. Thus early had the new title borne fruit, though not yet confirmed by Parliament, in questions of legal jurisdiction and authority. And whether the Mayor had been strictly justified in all that he had done about Bilney's execution appears to have been a question on which he himself expected inquiry. On the Sunday after Michaelmas — that is to say, on October 1,— having called those who had been present at Bilney's

His appeal to the King.

[1] They are printed by Cattley in the Appendix to vol. iv. of his edition of Foxe, Nos. iv., v., and vi.

burning to the council house, he desired to have a certificate of the details signed by the whole of them (as he was going up to the Parliament),[1] which he must be prepared to be questioned about it. He read to the witnesses his own account of the execution; but an alderman named Curat said it was unsatisfactory, as not mentioning the fact that Bilney had read at the stake a bill of retractation which he had already made in prison to Dr. Pellis, the Bishop's chancellor. This seems to have irritated the Mayor, as Dr. Pellis had applied to him to have it exemplified under the town seal, and the Mayor, to put him off, said he would do so if it agreed with a draft of his own, which he said he found it did not, and other aldermen thought his statement the correct one. It was this dispute which Sir Thomas More had before him, and we must suppose that he formed a right judgment on the matter. Moreover, even if Curat's evidence was mistaken that Bilney read his recantation at the stake, it stands uncontradicted as to the fact that he did make a recantation in prison.[2]

Now, what was at the bottom of all this? I take it that the Court wished, first of all, to make out that Bilney's appeal to the King should have been allowed; then to hush up the matter of his having made any retractation, and to cast all the odium they could upon the clergy in connection with his death. The Mayor himself professed not to have heard him utter his retractation, which was probably true, as he read it over in a low tone before addressing the people more openly. But that Bilney was sincerely penitent, as More tells us, for all that he had done in flying in the face of spiritual authority we cannot possibly doubt. What caused him to be so rebellious? Surely the encouragement he expected to receive

[1] Parliament was to have met on the 6th November, but it was prorogued till January.

[2] See the depositions above cited.

from the Court. It is certain that even in the middle of the year 1530 the King was quite well known to be encouraging heresy, though he did not avow it openly; and it was not long before Bilney's execution in 1531 that the Convocation of Canterbury had grudgingly conceded to him the title of Supreme Head of the Church with the qualification already mentioned. The heretics who had been encouraged by what was known of the King's disposition hoped for protection; but Convocation, fully aware of the machinations of the Court, endeavoured still to vindicate its authority to the utmost, and prevent all spiritual law, and public morality as well, being utterly subverted. On the 3rd March they drew up articles of heresy against Bilney, Latimer, and Crome, as the three leading disturbers of spiritual authority. But Latimer was in high favour with the King, and it took a year to procure his submission; Crome was heard by the King himself; and Bilney, hearing of the King's new title, appealed to him against his sentence. In vain, however; for Henry had no thought of interfering with the due course of law when the case was perfectly plain; and as Bilney was clearly a relapsed heretic, he was left to his fate. Moreover, as I have before observed, his execution took place under the civil law—not under the ecclesiastical; for the judgment of the spiritual courts was only that he was a heretic, and that he had relapsed. Spiritual judgments could go no further than that. It was the King's own laws that put him to death, though it was the King's influence which had probably most to do with the revival of his heresy.

Latimer's testimony about his friend many years after, that he died a martyr for the Gospel,[1] is not to be trusted. Bilney's recantation, which the Mayor of Norwich refused to certify, and which many, no

[1] He says he "died well against the tyrannical See of Rome."

doubt, even at the time refused to believe,[1] had been forgotten long before the days of Edward VI., and his death seemed to mean a great deal more than it actually did mean. But from what Foxe himself records we may easily judge that the truth was such as More said it was. Bilney had been guilty of denouncing images and pilgrimages in a spirit of insubordination to Church authority; but he had never ceased to reverence the mass or to believe in the real presence. How could such a man have denied the authority of the Church, even when the Church called upon him to abjure? He may have had his own philosophy in some things, and his own perplexities about the Church's teaching; but the essential principles to which he had always clung required submission. What Latimer calls his repentance for his abjuration was doubtless a renewal of old propensities, but they never prompted him to renewed rebellion till rebellion seemed not unlikely

[1] Those who sympathised with his heresies were anxious to deny that he had recanted them. The following is More's account of the case in his Preface to the Confutation of Tyndal's answer (*Works*, p. 349):—"But yet was God so gracious lord unto him that he was finally so fully converted unto Christ and his true Catholic faith, that not only at the fire, as well in words as in writing, but also many days before, he had revoked, abhorred, and detested such heresies as he before had holden; which notwithstanding, there lacked not some that were very sorry for it, of whom some said, and some wrote out of Norwich to London, that he had not revoked his heresies at all, but still had abiden by them. And such as were not ashamed thus to say and write, being afterwards examined thereupon, saw the contrary so plainly proved in their faces by such as at his execution stood by him while he read his revocation himself, that they had in conclusion nothing else to say but that he read his revocation so softly that they could not hear it. Howbeit they confessed that he looked upon a bill and read it, but they said that they could not tell whether it were the bill of his revocation or not. And yet rehearsed they themself certain things spoken by him to the people at the fire, whereby they could not but perceive well that he revoked his errors, albeit that some of them watered his words with additions of their own, as it was well proved before them. They could not also deny but that, forthwith upon his judgment and his degradation, he kneeled down before the Bishop's chancellor in the presence of all the people, and humbly besought him of absolution from the sentence of excommunication, and with his judgment held himself well content, and knowledged that he had well deserved to suffer death, that he then wist he should. They could not say nay, but that, upon this his humble request and prayer, he was there, in the presence of all the people, assoyled before that he was carried out of the court, which themself well wist would never have been but if he had revoked."

to meet with favour. In this expectation he was deceived; but Latimer lived to a day when the floodgates were forced open, and he was carried along by a current which he felt, truly enough, derived its origin from such insubordination as that of Bilney.

The other martyr of this period, whose case I propose briefly to set forth, was John Frith. He and one Andrew Hewet, a tailor's apprentice, who suffered along with him, were burned together in Smithfield on the 4th July 1533. The story of Frith is more heroic than that of Bilney, and inspires even deeper sympathy; for though he went further in impugning received doctrines, he made no recantation, and yet refused to dogmatise in the position he took up. In this he stands absolutely alone among the sufferers from those cruel laws, that while confessing his own opinion, he would not stand to it as a thing controvertible, but thought that it was one he had a right to hold without being excommunicated. A description of his examination and what led to it is given in a letter[1] which a young layman named Germain Gardiner wrote to a friend not long afterwards; and to convey the feeling of devout youths at the time (unsympathetic though it be) it may well to quote some extracts. The person addressed, though not named, is evidently Edward Foxe, afterwards Bishop of Hereford, at this time Provost of King's College, Cambridge, where Frith was once a student.

Frith.

Germain Gardiner's account of his examination.

Ye have heard how John Fryth, sometime scholar in that college whereof ye were after his departing master, was afterward among others at Oxenford found busy in setting abroad these heresies which, lately sprung in Almayne, by

[1] "A letter of a yonge gentylman named mayster Germen Gardynare wryten to a friend of his, wherein men may se the demeanour and heresy of Johan Fryth late burned, and also the dyspycyons and reasoning uppon the same had between the same mayster Germen and hym. Prented by W. Rastell in Flete Strete in Saynt Brydys Chyrchyarde," 1534. There is a copy in the Grenville Library which seems to be unique.

the help of such folk be spread abroad unto sundry parts of Christendom, tending to nothing else but to the division and rending asunder of Christ's mystical body, his Church, the pulling down of all power, and utter subversion of all commonwealth.

Little as we can realise the sentiment that erroneous theology may be dangerous to commonwealths, the clergy did not stand alone in that opinion, and the very fact that heretics were burned was due to the reality of that belief. The writer goes on to tell his friend that, being punished, Frith fled beyond the sea, and in the company of William Tyndale and other heretics, including George Joye,[1] "at whose name," he writes, "I am sure ye sigh, seeing yourself to have been so deluded with the hope which once ye conceived of him"—and he "profited so much within a while in ungracious, unshamefaced boldness, that, being not above the age of twenty-four years, the arrogant fool, nothing doubting the judgment of the whole world, took upon him to teach the whole Church of Christ, revoking us from our error (as he calleth it) of purgatory, wherein we have this 1500 years continued, willing us to trust herein the spirit, which, now in the end of the world, God hath raised in his young breast to rebuke the world of their long horrible error and detestable blindness," and so forth. It is well that the twentieth century should hear the sixteenth speak its mind a little, even though the mouthpiece of the sixteenth, being a young man, may display rather special vehemence. Acquiescence is not necessary, but appreciation is desirable. I shall cut down the flowers of speech a little hereafter, merely giving a few more with an outline of the general substance of the letter.

Not succeeding to his wish in sowing cockle in

[1] George Joye, another Cambridge man, tainted with the same heresies as Bilney and Arthur, had fled abroad when cited with them before Wolsey. He became Tyndale's secretary, but deserted him and issued a bad edition of his Testament without reference to Tyndale himself.

Christ's corn, and fearing that "the brethren" might accuse him of negligence, we are told that Frith came back to England, where, being imprisoned in the Tower, he uttered "his malice against God and the doctrine of His Church further than before," and denied the body of our Lord to be present in the Sacrament of the Altar, calling the worship of it idolatry.

> Methink I see hereat your joints tremble, your eyes stare, your hairs start up, and all the behaviour of your body alter, abhorring these devilish words of this cursed wretch. But who can let the Devil to be like himself?

After having "written this wholesome book and sent it out already amongst his brethren," Frith received a letter from Tyndale, "warden of their guild, exhorting him not to meddle yet with the Blessed Sacrament, nor no high matters passing (as he calleth them) the common capacity, but to creep low by the ground and follow meekness"; suggesting, however, "that if the bishops would fall at a composition and be content to suffer the New Testament of his poisoned translation to be sold, then Frith should promise for them both to write no more, and else they would not spare to write still." Meanwhile he was willing "to grant the belief in the Blessed Sacrament as indifferent, but in no wise to confess it for a necessary article of the faith." This counsel of Tyndale's came too late, for Frith's book was already abroad; but he held to it so far as continually to maintain that a man might choose whether to believe that the body of Christ was in the sacrament, provided he did not worship it. The writer then goes on to show the great pains taken for his reconciliation by the lords and others of the King's Council:—

How he was influenced by Tyndale.

> His learning, to say the truth, for his age was to be praised, if his arrogance had not made him esteem it more even than it was. I mean his learning in the tongues and other

humanity; for in anything else, whatsoever he hath kept in store, surely he hath uttered none. For his works of heresies be but Luther, Zwinglius, Hwyskyn,[1] and such other, translate out of Latin into English. And in his communication how little he showed by his answers made to my lord my master, both presently and by message, ye shall easily perceive and judge.

"My lord my master" was the writer's uncle, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, who had been Frith's tutor at Cambridge, and who on that account was the more deeply grieved that his pupil should cast himself away.

But he, having once alleged upon a certain point this place of Esaye, *Et acceperunt de manu Domini duplicia*,[2] understanding thereunto for his purpose *premia*, and thereupon the book showed, wherein followed *pro omnibus peccatis suis*, being confounded, would no more dispute of anything, but said, except my lord were touched with the same spirit wherewithal he was himself, it should not avail to dispute with him. Whereunto my lord answered, "If I should say likewise to you, and every man to other, then should no man labour to bring in again him that once were out of the right way. . . . If your cause be the better why should ye not think to win me?"

I believe the writer does not exaggerate the gentleness and reasonableness of Bishop Gardiner shown in this reply, and it is a pity that he himself did not imitate his uncle's moderation. Probably, instead of influencing him thus, it made him more incensed at the arrogant tone, as he considered it, of a young man first opposing himself to the whole body of traditional Church opinion, and then showing himself petulant to such a very gentle monitor. Frith, he says, went on to maintain that all the old doctors of the Church were on his side, and if any doctor could be shown him of a contrary opinion he would

[1] Hausschein, better known by the Greek translation of his name, Œcolampadius, which he used himself.
[2] Isaiah xl. 2.

acknowledge it as a truth, but yet no article of faith; for Tyndale (as the writer remarks) forbade him to bind the consciences of the people. This concession gave some satisfaction, especially to Bishop Gardiner, who first endeavoured to meet his objection that the natural body of our Lord could not be in two places at once by observing that it was not more wonderful than His passing through shut doors after His resurrection—an argument to which Frith replied that when it was said, "He came in, the gates being shut," it was only meant that He came in late after the gates were shut, but was admitted on knocking; also that the angel lifted up the stone to let him rise. "Jesu," exclaims the writer, "how religiously these men handle the Scripture which prattle nothing else but Scripture!" On the subject of the angel and the stone Bishop Gardiner referred him to St. Anselm and St. Jerome; and on the main question, as he had offered to abide by the authority of the ancient Fathers, showed him a passage in a homily of St. Chrysostome beginning "Is it bread thou seest?" to which he could make no answer. He asked leave to have an extract in writing; which was allowed him. But next day he was as arrogant again as ever. When Bishop Gardiner asked him how he liked the homily, and if he had any further difficulties, he said he had slept little since their last communication; and, being asked why so, said he had occupied himself in prayer for knowledge of the truth, and being assured that God had heard him, it stood not with his conscience to confess that faith, for he knew it was untrue.

The private persuasions of his old tutor, Bishop Gardiner, being ineffectual, on Friday the 20th June he was publicly examined at St. Paul's by Stokesley, Bishop of London, who called to him Bishops Gardiner and Longland (of Winchester and Lincoln) as his assessors. Finally they left him to the secular power.

But what pain they took with him, how fatherly they laboured and travailed for the amendment of that ungracious child, and of another also,[1] which only for company of Frith held the same opinion without grounding himself upon any Scripture but Frith's bare word and his spirit, wherewith he was himself also possessed, and therefore left also with Frith. Of another heretic also, one Thomas Philippes, which was examined the Thursday next ensuing, I shall not need to write unto you, for there be other enough which both can and I am sure woll advertise you of that which was openly done. Wherefore, leaving to write of these matters . . . I shall write what means my lord my master used, for that only can I but declare unto you.

After the body of Frith was despaired to have saved the soul, which the fool himself regarded not as beseemed, nor thought, peradventure, for all his hypocrisy, of no life to come after this, but only as the heathen do, to live by glory; surely, the latter day of my being with him, he said plainly that he thought no Saint's soul came in heaven before the day of Doom, but in the mean season reposed himself he wist not where. And some of his sect say that the soul of our Saviour Christ himself (O what blasphemous wretches be these!) is not yet in Heaven. But malice hath no bounds.

Bishop Gardiner's efforts to reclaim him.

After Frith's condemnation my lord sent him a chaplain of his "with Rupert,[2] who on the sixth chapter of John declareth the matter so plain, and so rejecteth Frith's objections as though it had been specially written against him; which author he refused, alleging that no learned man did ever refer that place to the Sacrament of the altar," and that Rupert understood the place amiss. On which my lord sent the writer to him next day with the third tome of St. Chrysostome, where in the 44th, 45th, and 46th homilies he refers that passage to the Sacrament, and proves by it the bodily Presence there. The writer says he showed him only the 45th, which indeed should have been enough in answer to his brag "that no learned man referred

[1] Andrew Hewet.
[2] A famous theologian, abbot of Deutz in the twelfth century.

that place to the Sacrament," though Luther is content to refer it otherwise. He was surprised that Frith "could utter no more cunning than he did" in their conference, and, unwilling "to bring home the heavy news of desperation," even exceeded his commission, feeling that though he was very young and his learning small, Frith's years were many hundred times under the age of the Church more than his own years were under Frith's. He accordingly entered into a long discussion with him, of which he gives a minute account, at length defying him to show that any man ever held his view before Berengarius. He could find none but "one Bertram in Charles's days the Great"; but the writer told him

> That opinion which he denieth might be proved unto him to have been so well allowed by all learned men, both Catholic and heretics, before that Bertram his days that the holy men, as St. Ireneus and St. Hilary, both in their disputations had grounded themselves upon that point, to confute other heresies which himself now denied. Then began he, as it had been in a tragedy, to ruffle and cry, "Why had not the bishops told him this?" complaining sore that they had showed him no such place, so that a man would have thought him very sorry that he knew it not before, and desirous to know it then; which proved afterward clean contrary.

The writer reminded him that to whatever the bishop showed him he had always put his own gloss, as he would have done no doubt in this case. He resented this censure, but next day justified it, when, having the books brought to him and the passages shown, with liberty to read as much as he chose, he at length "slipped away, saying that they were somewhat to the purpose, but not so much as I said they were." Germain asked him to show what was defective in the evidence; and another layman whom he had brought with him, a gentleman's servant more learned than either of them (unless Frith kept more learning in store than he had found him utter), though

he too seemed younger than Frith, joined in the discussion, asking among other things what first moved Frith to reject the old opinion and believe this so steadfastly that he would die for it? Frith replied "that he believed it not, but thought it only more probable than t'other part, so that his conscience would not suffer him to reprove it"; and he thought the bishops very unjust to sentence him as a heretic when he "offered himself to be reformed; which he performed, nevertheless, never a whit, and miracles he showed none."

He had offered also the first day, if Germain would show him express evidence of transubstantiation, "or that a sinner did receive the body of Christ," that he would acknowledge it for truth. This was to save himself when he was unable to answer the passages from holy doctors in proof of the corporal Presence, insinuating that only good men received the body of Christ by faith, and sinners could not, for at first he had not admitted the natural body to be in the Sacrament at all. Yet these things had all been shown him before, as in St. Austin's saying that our Lord gave the price of our redemption to Judas, etc. But whenever Germain showed him these places, and asked him to keep his promise and acknowledge the truth, he only said that his conscience would not serve him so to say. At last they asked him what he meant by making promises which he would not keep, and he said the matters were not yet plainly showed him. After still further conference, as he showed no hope of amendment, they prepared to depart, but remained to see the end of another man's communication with him, and then resorted to him again, not to dispute further, but to lament his obstinacy; but it led to a new disputation as to what was the Church, whether known or invisible, for he said faith was ever preserved among the elect. And this, too, is reported at some length. The writer ends by hoping that the punish-

ment of Frith's arrogance has abated the pride of heretics, and somewhat abashed those privy enemies of the Church, who, as St. Ambrose says, are more to be feared than those who express their minds openly.

Such is the story contained in this very remarkable contemporary letter. It may be that we can little sympathise with all the discussion, and cannot but feel for a man hard pressed on account of his differences with the Church. Mere words are delusive, and hard logic is out of place in spiritual matters. But it must surely be allowed that when brought to bay in argument Frith showed himself capable of very outrageous suggestions, and that he had not, when he first launched into heresy, taken full account of the great mass of authority with which, as it was then interpreted, he would have to contend. He was not quite so young as Germain Gardiner made him, but he was a youth full of promise in earlier days, when, after taking a degree of B.A. at Cambridge, he was called by Wolsey to Oxford, and made a minor canon in his newly founded college. That magnificent seminary, which if it had been left to do its work in freedom, would probably have been a great agency in correcting crude opinions and resting theology on a sound basis of enlightened criticism, was looked upon with evil eyes by some, partly because a number of small monasteries had been suppressed by papal bulls to endow it, partly because its founder was at the time more than usually unpopular. Trade with the Low Countries was then interrupted by a war against the Emperor, and there was much distress at home. But heretical books were smuggled from Flemish ports, and found a special number of readers who studied them in secret among the scholars in Wolsey's new foundation. Suddenly the alarm was raised, and a number of these Oxonians, among whom was Frith, were committed to prison. Two, unhappily, died in

His earlier career.

confinement in a sunk floor of the college, a fact which heretics were not slow to impute—indeed, with too great probability—to unwholesome conditions and "the filthy stench" of salt fish preserved in neighbouring compartments underground.

On this Frith and others were liberated by the Cardinal's order on condition that they would not go above ten miles out of Oxford. But Frith, hearing of the escape and recapture of Garret and the examination of him and his friend Dalaber for heresy, thought best to make his way beyond sea. Two years later, we are told, which would mean 1530, the time when heresy was winked at by the Court, he came back and betook himself to Reading, where the prior, as he well knew, had already been a considerable purchaser of heretical literature. Here, unfortunately, he was caught as a vagabond and set in the stocks. But after enduring that uncomfortable position for some time without letting it be known that he was a scholar, and being very hungry, he desired to have the schoolmaster of the town, Leonard Cox, brought to see him. The schoolmaster, whom he addressed in Latin, was at once moved to sympathy, which was increased by further talk, especially when he heard him repeat from memory some passages of the *Iliad*, and his liberation was presently effected. He was not safe, however, from the Lord Chancellor, Sir Thomas More; and if the above chronology be right, he must very soon have gone abroad again. At all events, he was in Holland, newly married there, in the spring of 1531, when the King was endeavouring to lure him, like other refugees, back to England once more if he would only abandon extreme opinions; for apparently the King, to his dying day, never intended to shield sacramental teaching openly opposed to that of the Church. Frith, nevertheless, had learned that his presence in England would be valued at the Court, and it was probably this that induced him to return

in July[1] 1532. And in England he circulated in MS. a book against the Sacrament, the main thesis of which was exactly what he ultimately stood to, "that it is no article of faith necessary to be believed, under pain of damnation, that the sacrament should be the natural body of Christ."

Frith tells us in the preface to a later work that this treatise was written at the request of a friend to put in writing the substance of a private disputation. It was a dangerous thing to do; for the friend, whose name is kept a secret, lent it to a London tailor named William Holt, who carried it to Sir Thomas More. But More also obtained two other copies, which shows that either Frith himself or his friend had given them secret currency. Now, it was simply an official duty with More as Lord Chancellor, however much against the unavowed wishes of his master, to aid in bringing heretics to judgment, and hence it was that, in Foxe's language, he "persecuted" Frith "both by land and sea, besetting all the ways and havens, yea, and promising great rewards, if any man could bring him any news or tidings of him." It was not wonderful, therefore, that the quest was by and by successful, and that Frith, just as he was endeavouring to escape abroad once more, was arrested and lodged in the Tower—a place, indeed, for political prisoners rather than for heretics, but his attempt to escape, I presume, made it seem the right place for him. He was gently treated, however, and not loaded like other prisoners with irons; for the King, I dare say, still looked upon him as a man who might do him useful service. The Lord Chancellor, on the other hand, set himself the literary task of writing an answer to his book, not without a feeling that to answer such a book might be to give it further currency, for which reason, though he at first printed his answer, he afterwards

[1] About St. James's Day (25th July), according to Stokesley's register quoted by Demaus in his *Life of Tyndale*, p. 330, note.

suppressed it, and kept it, as Frith had kept his own work, in MS. A copy, however, reached Frith in the Tower, where, being apparently denied no facilities of doing so, he wrote a rejoinder to it. The time at last came when he was examined, as we have seen, at St. Paul's, condemned and handed over to the secular power. While awaiting execution he wrote a letter to his friends (which was kept in MS. till it was safe to publish it in the reign of Edward VI.[1]) giving his own account of his examination, in which, though some points are not unnaturally suppressed, there is no real disagreement with that in Germain Gardiner's letter. It shows us, however, what Germain Gardiner omits to mention, that he was examined for denying purgatory as well as transubstantiation; and while he gave reasons for disbelief in either doctrine, he adopted the same attitude as regards both—that is to say, that neither dogma should be considered a necessary article of the faith.

Peculiarity of his position.

Frith was the first martyr for disbelief in transubstantiation, who defended his view like a scholar; yet the position he took up was not at all scholastic. We may doubtless agree very well with his conclusion that belief or unbelief in such a doctrine cannot be vital, else if the Romanists are right Protestantism ought long ago to have withered away in spiritual decay, while, on the opposite hypothesis, Romanism must be gradually losing its hold on civilisation. More probably there is a loss on both sides from sharp dogmatic antagonism, which originally was embittered by coercion. But the assailants of an old system undoubtedly incur a great responsibility, and a man should be fortified with the most crushing arguments before he arraigns of error doctrines that seem to have received the very highest sanction of ecclesiastical tradition. Dogmatism is only increased by attacks that cannot be fully sustained, and a man who did not quite know his ground, whether to build upon the

[1] It may be most conveniently read in Foxe, v. 11-14.

Scriptures, on the authority of the Fathers, or upon simple reason, was not the man to win the battle of a purer and more spiritual theology. The Church, it was felt, must give some guidance; it must teach either one doctrine or another. And to say that it should allow a doctrine like transubstantiation to be held in suspense, so as either to be believed or rejected without blame, was simply to call upon the Church to abdicate all pretension to guidance.

Nor would Frith himself, to all appearance, have taken up such a seemingly illogical position if he had not been warned by Tyndale against provoking the enmity of other heretics like Dr. Barnes, who, being a disciple of Luther, held as strongly as any Roman Catholic the doctrine of the real corporeal presence. It was important to keep the forces of heresy together for mutual support; and Barnes, who was otherwise a useful ally, would have been turned into an active enemy if Frith had openly denounced as erroneous the belief that the elements, after consecration, were no longer bread and wine. Frith's position, therefore, was illogical, and not that of a clear-sighted divine, for he could not afford to lose the sympathy of men who, like Barnes, agreed with him at least that the Host was not to be worshipped. But illogical as he was, and unable, apparently, to hold his own in argument, he deserves none the less sympathy on that account, for the deepest convictions of the heart fail often to justify themselves in the arena of the schools. A negative belief, indeed, cannot be so valuable as a positive one, where the positive one is pure and real, but clearly it can only plead for a generous toleration in the face of overwhelming authority. Frith had been trying to undermine the received Christian doctrine without being prepared fully to justify the attempt, and the discussion seems to have proved that the real foundation of his own particular view was merely rationalistic.

Now, the human reason has its province, even in matters of the faith, but it cannot be expected to learn with ready intelligence the deep truths of Revelation. These must be accepted humbly in the first instance and thought out by slow degrees. Rationalism consists only in scouting paradoxes which are really the fruit of the fullest reasoning, and, however plausible and triumphant for a time, it always loses itself in the end, forgets its original basis, and tries to establish itself on new grounds which are equally untrustworthy. True orthodoxy, on the other hand, maintains its place from age to age through hosts of varying philosophies, simply because it is the most essential philosophy of all. That transubstantiation is paradoxical to the natural reason is not in itself a sufficient argument against it, for as much may be said of the two great doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. But the common sense of the world is conscious that without these two great doctrines the whole meaning of the Christian revelation is lost; we can no longer explain even the existence of Christianity in the world, or what it was Christ died for. Here, however, we have a doctrine which a very large part of the Christian world hold to be unreasonable, if not absolutely unthinkable; and it may well be questioned whether it has been held persistently, or held in a like sense during the first fifteen hundred years of the Christian era. For I presume those quotations from the Fathers which confounded Frith would not be held by any well-read Protestant divine to show that the same doctrine is to be found on this point in St. Paul, in the Fathers, and in the decisions of the Council of Trent. To believe it, indeed, requires the acceptance in things physical as well as spiritual of the philosophy of the Middle Ages. It must still be professed, of course, by all who would not be excluded from the Roman Catholic communion; it had to be

professed at one time by all who would avoid the stake. But truth is unforced and justifies itself continually, not only without, but against external coercion.

"It would overcharge any story," writes Foxe, "to recite the names of all them that during those bitter days before the coming of Queen Anne (*i.e.* Anne Boleyn), either were driven out of the realm, or were cast out from their goods and houses, or brought to open shame by abjuration." The reader, I trust, has now seen why the persecution was particularly bitter during those few years before the coming of Queen Anne; and I hope I have done justice to the story of the two principal victims at least. Of the hosts of abjurations during the same period it would be hopeless to say much. Foxe himself only gives an imperfect catalogue of those in the diocese of London. Of the martyrs during "those bitter days" Frith and Hewet were the last; indeed, their actual burning took place more than a month after Anne Boleyn's coronation. So, "the coming of Queen Anne" certainly made a difference. It was quite another set of martyrs that were to be persecuted now, and with a far more ferocious persecution, under new Acts of Parliament intended simply to destroy obedience to the See of Rome.

CHAPTER IV

MARTYRS FOR ROME

Henry VIII. married Anne Boleyn secretly on the 25th January 1533. She was crowned as Queen on Whitsunday, 1st June. Between these dates, on 23rd May, Cranmer had given sentence that the King's marriage with Katharine of Aragon was invalid, and on the 28th he had held a secret investigation which was declared to have proved the validity of his marriage to Anne Boleyn. Such was the final result of years of protracted scheming, not so much to gratify the King's lust, which was already satiated long before he married Anne, as to redeem the pledge by which he had won her, and still to keep her to himself. How fast things had moved, even in the course of two brief years! The acknowledgment of the King as Supreme Head of the English Church extorted from the clergy in 1531, with the poor qualification, "as far as the law of Christ allowed," and the "Submission" of 1532, by which they promised to enact no new canons without licence, had already destroyed the old autonomy of the Church, and made hopeless any denunciation of evil in high places, even by the most independent class of the King's subjects. The next thing was to cut them off from any spiritual help from abroad. At the end of the year in which Anne was proclaimed Queen, the King having been excommunicated by the Pope as soon as the news reached Rome, it was decided that

the Pope should be called Pope no longer, but only "Bishop of Rome"; and from that date, during the whole of this and the succeeding reign, it was dangerous for the King's subjects to give him the old accustomed title. He was to be considered only a foreign bishop now, with no more authority in England than any other foreign bishop.

In January 1534, accordingly, Parliament passed various Acts against the Holy See. No more bulls were to be procured from Rome, and bishops were no longer to go thither for confirmation. They were to be elected henceforth at the King's nomination, and to be confirmed and consecrated by the archbishop without bulls, an archbishop being consecrated by the other metropolitan and two bishops, or by four bishops named by the King. In November Parliament sat again, and referring to the act of the clergy acknowledging the King's supremacy, without taking any notice of the qualification they had attached to it, declared him to be "Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England," ordaining that all the authority therein implied should be henceforth annexed to the Crown. Bishop Fisher, Sir Thomas More, and various other persons, were attainted for refusing the oath to the new Act of Succession, though it was only the preamble they objected to, which, among other things, declared the King's first marriage to have been against the laws of God. At the beginning of 1535 the King's new title was proclaimed, and Thomas Cromwell, as Vicar-General for the King, was commissioned to visit the churches, monasteries, and clergy throughout the kingdom. In April the new laws were brought into operation for the first time in the trial of three Carthusian priors, and three other clergymen, of whom we shall speak presently. Let us look in detail into the story of the Carthusians first.

Acts against the See of Rome.

John Houghton, Prior of the London Charter House, had been in trouble already the year before,

The Charterhouse beside London.

and it throws a strange light on the fearful despotism now advancing to its full development, that a small community outside the City of London, which desired, above all things, seclusion from the world, were specially tormented about the Act for the Succession of Anne Boleyn's issue to the Crown. But commissioners under the Act went about swearing the King's subjects generally — every one over sixteen — to declare their approval of the King's second marriage and their readiness to accept the issue of it as legitimate. To refuse to swear meant death. And though the marriage was generally detested, the King's subjects felt that the responsibility for it rested only on the King himself, and took the oath required of them with very little resistance.[1] Prior Houghton felt about the matter very much as most did, but he told the commissioners that it was no concern of him and his brethren what lady the King chose to marry, or whom he was pleased to divorce, if nothing were demanded of them on the subject. The commissioners, however, insisted that he should call the convent together and make them declare upon oath that the King's first marriage was unlawful, and that they were bound to obey the issue of the second. Prior Houghton said he could not see how the first marriage could be invalidated when it had been duly celebrated and had been so long respected. On this he was at once sent to the Tower, with Humphrey Middlemore, the procurator of the house. But after a month's detention they were released, finding that they could take the oath with a qualification which good learned men thought admissible, and that there was no occasion to throw their lives away in resisting a statutory obligation.

[1] The unwillingness with which the oath was taken, the affection borne generally to Queen Katharine and her daughter, and the hatred of the marriage with Anne Boleyn, are shown very clearly in the contemporary letters of Chapuys, especially that which he wrote to the Emperor on the 22nd April 1534. (See *Letters and Papers*, vol. vii. No. 530.)

So we are informed by Maurice Chauncy, himself a member of that brotherhood, who wrote an account of these proceedings many years afterwards.[1] The convent naturally rejoiced to see their head restored to them, but the prior warned them they were by no means free from danger in the future. "Our hour," he said, "is not yet come." For the present he hoped the convent would do as he did; but he had a foreboding in a dream that within a year he himself would be sent back to that prison from which he had just been liberated, there to finish his course. Meanwhile they should endeavour to live together as long as possible without giving offence to God. Presently they were visited by two creatures of the King, Roland Lee, who had just been made Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and Thomas Bedyll, clerk of the Council, who came to take their oaths, now that the prior and procurator had agreed to be conformable. Yet even the prior's exhortations, apparently, could not persuade the whole convent to do like himself. Only four of the monks joined with him and the procurator in taking the oath, though eight other persons, described as servants and dwellers within the house, were content to follow their example. The rest of the brethren still remained reluctant; and to conquer their obstinacy, on the 6th June Bishop Lee returned, with Sir Thomas Kitson, Sheriff of London, in his company, and a body of armed men at their heels, to take all into custody who still refused the oath. This, joined to the prior's advice, completely settled the matter. All the remaining brethren—to the number of nineteen priests, three *professi* not in priests' orders, and thirteen *conversi*—consented to be sworn to the form of words proposed to them, with

Visited by Roland Lee and Bedyll.

1 "Persuasum est eis per quosdam probos et doctos viros, illam non esse licitam causam mortis infligendæ; quibus auditis, *sub conditione*, regiæ annuerunt jussioni, sicque dimissi domum redierunt, quos admodum læti suscepimus" (*Historia Aliquot Martyrum Anglorum*, 90. Edited by Father Doreau).

the qualification "as far as it might be lawful." The royal commissioners had at last gained their point after meeting with two rebuffs, and the house was left for a while in peace.[1]

The feelings of the brotherhood are expressed by Chauncy, who compares them to Jonah released from the whale's belly, and taking refuge under the shadow of the gourd—or ivy, as the Vulgate makes it—a translation which, though much more intelligible, has been rejected by Hebrew scholars as inaccurate.[2] But, like Jonah, they little thought how soon that ivy would wither. For, in the first place, the King had by this time secured his supremacy on pretty firm ground. In March the Convocation of Canterbury had already rejected papal jurisdiction under pressure. The Lower House had passed, by thirty-four votes against four noes and one doubtful, a resolution that the Roman Pontiff had "no greater jurisdiction bestowed on him by God in the Holy Scriptures in this realm of England than any other foreign bishop." In May a similar decision was obtained from the Convocation of York. In the course of the summer and autumn the signatures of the clergy all over the country were procured to declarations of exactly the same purport. And, finally, in November, when Parliament met again, it passed not only the Act of Supremacy, declaring the King head of the Church, but also a severe Act of Treasons, under which, after the 1st February following, it was to be high treason to *wish* or attempt to

The clergy at large made to disown papal authority.

[1] Chauncy's account of the matter, though written many years afterwards, seems to be very accurate except as to one point of date. He says it was on the 24th May 1534 that the brethren consented to take the oath. It was really on the 29th that the prior and procurator with the first section of the community took it; and even this is not the occasion when "venerunt consiliarii Regii et rectores civitatis cum satellitibus suis, rapere et carceri mancipari totum conventum," which, as shown by a document in Rymer (xiv. 491), was on the 6th June. Chauncy (*Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, 91) distinctly says the convent had twice repulsed the commissioners before, which must have been once in April and once on the 29th May.

[2] According to the *The Speaker's Commentary*, the plant was most probably the quick-growing *Palma Christi*, or castor-oil plant.

deprive the King, Queen, or their heirs, of any of their titles—the title of Supreme Head of the Church, of course, included—or to keep any castles or fortresses against the King (which some of his nobles certainly would have been very glad to do, considering the course he was now taking), or to withhold from him his ships, artillery, or munitions of war. No right of sanctuary, moreover, was to be allowed for any of these treasons. So strong were the measures the King felt necessary to the recognition of Anne Boleyn as Queen, and the exclusion of any effectual censure on his ecclesiastical proceedings.

In February 1535, therefore, the great crisis came, and every one had to consider whether he would acknowledge the King's supremacy over the Church to preserve his life, or to maintain his loyalty to the old spiritual head of Christendom at the cost of life itself, for there was no alternative left. Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More were already in the Tower awaiting examination on this very point, but they were not to be called to account so soon as the Carthusians. Prior Houghton and his brethren prepared for the worst. The prior ordered three days of solemn exercises. The first day was to be one of general confession, each monk choosing a confessor for himself out of the priests in the convent, to all of whom he gave a faculty of full absolution. Next day was to be a day of mutual reconciliation. The third day they would celebrate a mass of the Holy Ghost for grace to enable them to fulfil His will. On the second day the prior himself led the example of humility after an impressive sermon, kneeling first before the senior monk and asking his forgiveness for any excesses or offences towards him of which he might have been guilty in heart, word, or act, on which the other did the same to him. The prior then proceeded in like manner through the first, and then through the second choir, desiring pardon of each

Prior Houghton and his convent prepare for the worst.

particular monk, to the last lay brother. From that day the altered face and colour of the prior, which had hitherto been always serene and unchangeable, betrayed evidence of intense grief and terror.

I can hardly refrain from following Chauncy's account of the *triduum* to the story of the third day. After the elevation of the Host there seemed a soft whisper in the air heard by many with their outward ears, and by all with the ears of their hearts, and the holy prior was moved to such abundance of tears that for a long time he was unable to proceed with the office. The convent was stupefied, hearing a voice and conscious of some sweet working in the heart, though they knew not whence it came or whither it went. They were only filled with a deep and joyful emotion, and felt that God was there, truly present, even the lay brethren in their chapels near the choir being partakers of this special grace; and the prior himself spoke of it at the next meeting of the chapter as a thing to encourage their devotion. "It was not for me," he said, "but for your sanctity, that God did this work." On which there was a gentle contest among them who should think most humbly of himself.[1]

Two other priors visit them.

While the prior was still daily comforting his brethren, he received a visit from Father Robert Laurence, prior of the Charterhouse of Beauvale, and two days later Father Augustine Webster, prior of the Charterhouse of Axholme, came also on a visit on the business of his house. Houghton himself had been prior of Beauvale, and Laurence had succeeded him; Webster, the prior of Axholme, was a professed monk of Sheen. Thus two Carthusian priors from the country happened to be staying with Prior Houghton at a time when he and his whole convent were preparing themselves to meet a trial unprecedented in the history of their Order. Nor did the steps they

[1] *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, 94-7.

had already taken diminish the call upon their fortitude, for the King was soon informed that the prior and convent were preparing to resist, and his indignation was growing into fury. *Ira principis mors est* —the anger of a king is death—was a saying in many mouths in the sixteenth century; and if any one thought of withstanding his sovereign, it would have been the height of folly not to measure the full consequences beforehand. The Carthusians were not guilty of any such error; they knew the consequences, and were determined to face them. But the three priors consulted together, and agreed that, leaving the issue to God, they would approach Thomas Cromwell, now not only the King's secretary, but invested with a new dignity as his vicegerent in spiritual things, to beseech him to intercede with his Majesty that their Order might be exempted, at least from the full rigour of the law, in the matter of taking the oath. To expect to move Cromwell, indeed, was a very hopeless project, and it was not likely to be made more hopeful by men who had spent their lives in seclusion from the world. Cromwell ordered all three to the Tower as traitors.[1]

Cromwell sends all three to the Tower,

It was probably before this interview—perhaps before the *triduum* at the Charterhouse—that, as we learn from a separate fragmentary account from the same pen, Prior Houghton alone (for the two others are not mentioned here) had a conference in the presence of Cromwell with the King's almoner, Foxe, soon afterwards Bishop of Hereford, Dr. Latimer, soon afterwards Bishop of Worcester, and another doctor unnamed, in which he sought to lay before them three points in justification of their conscientious scruples. The first was that, considering how Christ had given spiritual power to His vicars by the words, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 19), which the doctors all agreed

[1] *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, 99, 100.

in saying were addressed to St. Peter alone, though no doubt from him the power was communicated to the apostles, and so subsequently to the Pope and to bishops, how was it possible for the King, being a mere lay and secular man, to be head of the Church of England? But Mr. Secretary Cromwell hearing this broke in with the words, "You would make the King a priest, then?" and forbade all further conference. So what the other two points of Prior Houghton were we do not know.[1]

where he afterwards visits them.

After the three priors had been a week in the Tower Cromwell himself, accompanied by other councillors, paid them a visit there to get them to renounce papal authority and accept the King's supremacy according to the Act of Parliament. They again replied that they would be submissive so far as the law of God permitted; but Cromwell told them he would take no exceptions; they must acknowledge the King as Supreme Head of the Church, in things spiritual and temporal alike, without any qualification. They said that the Church Catholic had always held otherwise. "I care nothing for the Church," answered Cromwell; "will you consent or not?" They said they could not go against the Catholic Church, as St. Augustine said he could only believe the gospel of Christ because the Church taught him to believe it.[2] On this they were sent back to their cells.

[1] *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, 26, 27. This passage and nearly the whole fragment *De Crudeli Mactatione Diversorum*, translated into Italian, is embodied in an account of these martyrdoms in a Vatican MS., where the appeal to the King's almoner and the other doctors is brought in as if it had occurred at the trial. But this is scarcely possible. See *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII.*, vol. viii. No. 661, p. 248. Towards the bottom of the page here (l. 10 from bottom) the words, "The arrest was then made," appear to be a mistranslation. No doubt we ought to read, "Sentence was then given."

[2] *Ib.*, 100. At this point Chauncy says they were ordered to be shut up again in prison ("Tunc jussi sunt iterum recludi in carcere"), though the whole of this examination according to his narrative must have taken place within the Tower. Both Hendriks (*The London Charterhouse*, 139) and Father Doreau (*Henri VIII. et les Martyrs de la Chartreuse*, 156) omit all mention of Cromwell's personal visit to the Tower, and take his examination

No more, apparently, was to be got from Father Houghton at least. But the two country priors, Laurence and Webster, were called before Cromwell at the Rolls on the 20th April in presence of the King's almoner, Edward Foxe, Dr. John Tregonwell, Thomas Bedyll, now Archdeacon of Cornwall, Richard Riche, the King's solicitor, and Ralph Sadler, who was, fifty years later, the custodian of Mary Queen of Scots. One single question was put to them, whether they, or either of them, would be content to obey the King as Supreme Head under Christ of the Church of England according to the statute; and they both answered that they could not consent to do so, or believe that he was so in fact. The reply was witnessed by those present, and attested by a notary named John ap Rice, afterwards an active agent in the royal visitation of the monasteries.[1]

There was but one issue possible after this. A law had been passed in Parliament which, as these men considered, it was not competent for Parliament to pass; and to forbear to put it into execution because conscientious scruples were expressed would have stultified all that was done. There were very few, probably, who had not conscientious scruples, though the many were content to leave the responsibility with the King, who, with Cromwell as his agent, was the only one greatly interested in seeing it carried out—unless, indeed, we except Anne Boleyn

to have been held at the Rolls. But Chauncy distinctly reports it as having taken place at the Tower:—"Ad quos, cum per unam septimanam ibi detenti fuissent, ipse (Cromwell) cum multis aliis ex Consiliariis Regis devenit, propositurus eis decretum Parliamenti," etc. It seems only to have been the Priors of Bevall and Axholme that were examined at the Rolls.

[1] *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII.*, vol. viii. No. 565. This work, published under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, will hereafter be cited as *L. P.* with the Nos. of the volume and the letter added. Thus the reference would be in the present case *L. P.* VIII. 565. Where a volume is in two or more parts the number of the part will be given in a smaller roman numeral after that of the volume, thus: XII. ii.

and her particular circle. And there were two or three others, not Carthusians, whom it was found necessary to bring to account at the same time for a similar opposition to the new statute. Two Middlesex clergymen whose cures lay not far apart upon the Thames side—John Hale, Vicar of Isleworth, and Robert Feron, curate or chaplain of Teddington, had been talking together in the previous year about the King's second marriage and his other evil deeds. Feron had asked if there was no one bold enough to write against these things. Hale had replied that there were plenty of sufficient and notorious causes to write against the King, whose conduct he impugned in words reported against him to this effect:—

A vicar's account of the King's conduct.

> Sith the realm of England was first a realm, was there never in it so great a robber and pyller of the Commonwealth read of nor heard of as is our King. And not only we, that be of the spiritualty, by his wrongs be oppressed and robbed of our livings as if we were his utter enemies, enemies to Christ and guilty of His death, but also thus ungoodly he doth handle innocents, and also highly learned and virtuous men, not only robbing them of their livings and spoiling them of their goods, but also thrusting them into perpetual prison, so that it is too great pity to hear, and more to be lamented than any good Christian man's ears may abide. And he doth the same as if by that mean he would revenge his own injuries and the injuries of Christian faith, by whose title in a marvellous fashion he boasted himself to be above and to excel all other Christian kings and princes, thereby being puffed up with vainglory and pride, where of a truth he is the most cruellest, capital heretic, defacer and treader under foot of Christ and of His Church, continually applying and minding to extinct the same. And also the lay fee, sometime the noble and sometime the commons, without difference, upon chance and displeasure grown, or of truth forsought and feigned, he doth impoverish, destroy, and kill, for none other intent but that he may enjoy and use his foul pleasures, and increase to himself great treasure and riches, enriching strangers and pylling and robbing his own subjects, and making fair houses, but most

superfluous. Whose death I beseech God may be like to the death of the most wicked John, sometime king of this realm, or rather to be called a great tyrant than a king, and that his death may not be much unlike to the end of that manqueller Richard, sometime usurper of this Imperial realm. And if thou wilt deeply look upon his life, thou shalt find it more foul and more stinking than a sow, wallowing and defiling herself in any filthy place; for how great so ever he is, he is fully given to his foul pleasure of the flesh and other voluptuousness. And look how many matrons be in the court, or given to marriage, these almost all he hath violated, so often neglecting his duty to his wife, and offending the holy sacrament of matrimony. And now he hath taken to his wife, of fornication, this matron Anne, not only to the highest shame and undoing of himself, but also of all this realm.[1]

Such were the statements made by the aged Vicar of Isleworth (for he was an old man and had recently been much disabled by illness) to a young priest, both the speaker and the hearer being beneficed within a few miles of Hampton Court where gossip about the King's doings could not but be rife. And though the old man afterwards asked forgiveness for having "maliciously slandered the King and Queen and their Council" we can hardly take this as a confession that the statements were untrue, for he stated at the same time from whom he had his information; and it is clear that some of his informants were his accusers. Nor is there any appearance that *they* were punished for spreading false reports. Hale's confession, indeed, even in asking pardon for his utterances, is in itself very strong evidence—and by no means the only evidence—of the King's utter profligacy and libertinism. For the sovereign whose conscience compelled him to put away his brother's wife when a new mistress was only to be won on assurance of marriage, found not the slightest bar to a host of illicit connections whenever his passions moved him.[2]

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 609.

[2] *L. P.*, VIII. 567.

Dr. Reynolds

A far more notable man than either Hale or Feron was also to be brought to trial along with the Carthusians — Dr. Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine monk of the great monastery of Sion, eminent alike for his learning and for his holiness of life. Pole, to whom he was personally known, says that he was the only monk in England who was versed in the three languages (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, of course) in which all liberal learning was contained.[1] To this may be added the testimony of a foreigner sometimes supposed to be Erasmus (though he professes to have visited England in the suite of Cardinal Campeggio, which Erasmus certainly did not), that he was a man of angelic countenance, of angelic spirit, and of sound judgment.[2] He, too, though he protested that he meant no malice to the King, had refused to acknowledge him as Supreme Head of the Church of England, or to deny that the Pope was head of the Universal Church.[3] He and the three Carthusian priors with Hale and Feron were all brought to trial together at Westminster Hall on Wednesday the 28th April, and all pleaded not guilty. Next day Feron and Hale both withdrew that plea and pleaded guilty; on which Feron was pardoned three days later, but Hale was left to abide the severity of the law. The real heroes, however, were Reynolds and the Carthusian priors, against whom careful measures had been already taken to bring them within the scope of the new tyrannical law. On the Monday before the trial (April 26) they were visited in the Tower by agents of the King (probably Cromwell himself was of the number) and urged to show themselves conformable;

tried with the Carthusians and others.

[1] *L. P.*, x. 975.

[2] "Reginaldus monachus Brigittensis, vir angelico vultu et angelico spiritu, sanique judicii: quod ex illius colloquio comperi, quum in comitatu Cardinalis Campegii versarer in Anglia" (G. Covrinus Nucerinus at the end of More's *Latin Works*, p. 349 (Frankfort, 1689)). Chauncy's description of Reynolds is pretty nearly the same: "Vir angelico vultu, omnibus gratiosus et spiritu Dei plenus" (*Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, 22).

[3] *L. P.*, VIII. 565 (2), 566.

but they were one and all steadfast in their reply, declaring: "The King our Sovereign Lord is not Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England."

This declaration was enough for the purpose of the prosecution; and on the very next day a precept issued from the justices of a special commission which had been constituted on the 23rd, commanding the Constable of the Tower to bring them to their trial at Westminster on the morrow, Wednesday the 28th. At the trial Reynolds was asked by Chancellor Audeley why he persisted in an opinion against which so many lords and bishops in Parliament and the whole realm had decreed. He replied: "I had intended to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ when he was questioned by Herod, and not to answer. But since you compel me to clear both my own conscience and that of the bystanders, I say that if we wish to maintain opinions by proofs, testimony, or reasons, mine will be far stronger than yours, because I have all the rest of Christendom in my favour,—I dare even say, all this kingdom, although the smaller part holds with you, for I am sure the larger part is at heart of our opinion, although outwardly, partly from fear and partly from hope, they profess to be of yours." On this Cromwell demanded of him that he would declare, under the severest penalties, who they were who held with him. He replied, "All good men of the kingdom." And he added: "As to proofs of dead witnesses, I have in my favour all the General Councils, all written authorities, holy doctors of the Church for the last fifteen hundred years, especially St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory; and I am sure that when the King knows the truth, he will be very ill pleased, or rather indignant, at certain bishops who have given him such counsel."[1]

He was ordered to say no more but merely to

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 661.

reply to the question why he had, against the King's authority, maliciously counselled many persons not to be of the King's opinion. From the first, he solemnly protested he had never declared his opinion for malice against the King or any other person, unless it was asked him in confession, when he could not refuse. "It is true," he added, "I am much grieved that the King should be in such error. Therefore I have never said it in public, nor have I ever spoken of it, except as I have said above; and if I had not done so I would do it now, because I am so bound to God and my conscience; and in this I do not mean to offend God, or the Prince, or any one." Here he was ordered peremptorily to hold his tongue, and he merely added: "Since you do not wish me to speak further, then judge me according to your law." There were two systems of law, and as to secular law Reynolds felt that he could only submit to it. When the sentence was pronounced upon him, he calmly said, "This is a judgment of this world," and prayed the judges, considering that he had been eight days a prisoner, that he might be allowed two or three days more to prepare for his end. The judges replied that it did not lie with them, but with the King, to dispense such a favour; and he only remarked, "I trust to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. xxvii. 13).[1]

The three Carthusian priors were no less constant. On the 28th, when all the prisoners pleaded Not Guilty, the jury deferred giving a verdict, and next day discussed the matter all day among themselves whether they could really find such men guilty of transgressing the law. In the evening Cromwell, fearing that they would actually return a verdict of acquittal, sent to know the reason of their long delay, and what they intended to do. They told the messenger that they did not dare to pronounce such holy men

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 661, compared with *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, pp. 24, 25.

malefactors worthy of death; on which he sent immediately a new message that if the jury did not find them guilty they would themselves incur the death of malefactors. This threat for a time only strengthened their resolve to bring in an acquittal; but Cromwell, seeing the danger imminent of a complete failure in the new policy of coercion, went to them himself and by further cruel menaces compelled them to find a verdict against their consciences.[1]

Cromwell saw that his own policy was at stake, and with it his future credit with the King. Failure at this moment would have been his utter ruin, and his own life would undoubtedly have paid the forfeit if the conscientious resistance of churchmen could not have been completely crushed. So he was now altogether relentless. The three priors were sentenced[2] along with Reynolds to the horrible death then inflicted for high treason. Next day Cranmer's pity was excited for two of the victims, Prior Webster and Dr. Reynolds, whom he wrote to Cromwell that he would like to try and convert, as he was really surprised at men of their learning taking such a wrong view, and their conversion would have a better effect on the minds of others than if they were allowed to suffer the penalty of the law.[3] The dreadful sentence, however, was executed on the 4th May. The three Carthusians and Dr. Reynolds were dragged on hurdles through the city to Tyburn to meet their doom. Apart from the tyranny of the law, there was something new and appalling in the circumstances of their execution. Hitherto if a priest had become a criminal obnoxious to the law of the land, he was degraded from his priesthood before

Their execution.

[1] *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, p. 101.

[2] In the account of the trial in *L. P.*, VIII. 609, there is an unfortunate blunder at the end, where it is said that Houghton, Webster, Laurence, and Reynolds pleaded Not Guilty on the Wednesday, and "pleaded" Guilty on the Thursday. On the latter day they "were found" guilty.

[3] *L. P.*, VIII. 616.

being handed over to the secular power. But nothing of the kind was done in this case. The men wore the habits of their orders, sacerdotal or monastic, in their rough journey to the gallows.[1] The existence of Canon law or Church law side by side with the law of the land was henceforth to be ignored, and a brutal secular despotism was to govern without restraint all the King's subjects in all manner of causes. At least so it must have seemed when the Church itself was fettered by the new doctrine of Supremacy, to be enforced at the cost of the noblest blood in England.

Barbarous, moreover, as the customary punishment was in cases of treason, special pains were taken in this case to aggravate its horrors. After they had reached the gallows, the martyrs were hanged, cut down alive, taken to another place, set upon their feet and stripped of their clothes. They were then disembowelled, and their bowels were burned before their eyes while they still breathed. Each victim in turn witnessed the horrid butchery of his predecessor in suffering; yet each awaited his own turn unmoved, without a sign of fear in face, words, or gesture. In stripping them the executioner came upon the hair shirts worn by nearly all of them, which he had received orders not to remove like their other garments to facilitate the stroke of the sword. He accordingly had to strike hard and repeated blows to cut through this obstacle, and hack their bodies even worse than they would otherwise have been mangled. The Turk himself, as Pole remarks, was kind in comparison with Henry VIII.; for he not only tolerated the monks of Athos but commended himself to their prayers when he went to war. Pole might have added that even the executioner was scarcely so brutal as his sovereign; for, before his victims mounted the ladder, he knelt before Prior

[1] *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, p. 27.

Houghton and asked his forgiveness for the painful duty which he was about to perform. Nor did he ask in vain; for the good man, in token of forgiveness, took him in his arms and kissed him with a prayer for him and for the bystanders. As for the King, it was fully believed that he would have been glad to witness the butchery with his own eyes; and it was quite well known that almost all the Court were actually among the spectators, though some of them, apparently, were so far ashamed of themselves as to go thither in disguise.[1] Such was the Court of King Henry under Anne Boleyn's influence.

But if this savage butchery terrified the many into acquiescence with a law which no one loved, it had a different effect on some who had already taken the measure of prospective trials. Sir Thomas More from his prison in the Tower saw that morning the departure of Dr. Reynolds and the three Carthusian priors on their fatal journey; and he remarked to his favourite daughter, Margaret Roper, who had come to visit him: "Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriages? Wherefore thereby mayest thou see, mine own good daughter, what a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a strait and penitential and painful life religiously, and such as have in the world, like worldly wretches (as thy poor father hath done) consumed all their time in pleasure and ease licentiously."[2] That a man like Sir Thomas More could tax himself with being licentious in his love of ease is a marvel which in his case might almost make us doubt the perfect sincerity of the confession. For it does not seem

Sir Thomas More.

[1] *Poli Epistolae*, i. 98, 99; *Hist. Aliquot Martyrum*, pp. 27, 102; *L. P.*, VIII. p. 251.

[2] Roper's *Life of More* (Singer's edition, 1817), pp. 95, 96.

that he was ever off his guard against the moral dangers of the time; and he was even now preparing to meet the trial that awaited himself with a heroism not inferior to that of the men whom he felt that he would fain have accompanied to Tyburn. He, indeed, had been preparing for years past, and so had his friend and fellow-sufferer, Bishop Fisher, of whose story during the last few years we have now something to say.

There is much in common, indeed, though with some differences in the story of the troubles of these two martyrs. They were certainly the two men whom the King and Anne Boleyn regarded as the chief obstacles in the way of the general recognition of their marriage. But Fisher had excited the King's indignation at an earlier period than More. During the trial of the Divorce cause before the legates he had got up and said that at a former audience the King had declared his only anxiety to be to have justice done and to be relieved of his scruple of conscience, for which object he would gladly welcome any light that either the judges or any one else could throw upon the case. On this, the Bishop said, he felt bound to speak, not only by loyal duty but even for the salvation of his own soul, and tell the King what was the result with him of two years' careful study of the question. He affirmed that the King's marriage with Katharine was valid and could be unloosed by no power, human or divine. For this opinion, he said, he was ready to lay down his life; for John the Baptist had considered it impossible to die more nobly than in a cause of marriage, and marriage was not so holy then as it had since become by the shedding of Christ's blood. He then handed in a book which he had written upon the subject. The Court was quite unprepared for this; but Fisher, having led the way, was followed by Bishop Standish of St. Asaph, and Dr. Ligham, Dean

How Bishop Fisher first gave offence to the King.

of the Arches' Court, with arguments of their own on the Queen's behalf.[1]

To take the King at his most solemn word was a serious thing when everybody could see that he did not mean it. He had not wanted arguments to relieve his conscientious scruples but rather to confirm them, and to be supplied with what he said he wanted by a bishop in the highest repute for sanctity of life and sincerity in all things, was altogether too unbearable. The King wrote a highly impassioned answer to the Bishop addressed to the presiding legates; in which he said that Fisher had accused him to the judges in a manner like that of a disaffected subject. He reproached the Bishop with having held his peace all the while a legate had been sent for from Rome at very great expense to hear the cause, — although Fisher had been obliged to hold his peace at that time by the protestations of the King himself and Wolsey. And what did the Bishop mean by that reference to St. John the Baptist? It was nothing less than an insinuation that the King was acting the part of Herod, and he challenged Fisher to say that he had ever shown severity to those who did not favour his divorce. The King's paper was laid before Fisher, who was not afraid to answer it by marginal annotations;[2] and it cannot be supposed that Henry's temper was improved in consequence.

Only a few months later, on the fall of Wolsey, a Parliament met at Westminster—that Parliament which, as we have seen, has been called by some Henry VIII.'s Long Parliament, for it sat for nearly seven years, and by others the Reformation Parliament, because by it were carried those measures

[1] Ehses, *Römische Dokumente zur Geschichte der Ehescheidung Heinrichs VIII. von England*, pp. 116-17. The letter is also given, but less correctly, by Theiner (*Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum historiam illustrantia*, 585), who makes Cardinal Campeggio the writer, though it was really his secretary Floriano. Compare also Du Bellay's account of the incident in *L.P.*, IV. 5741.

[2] Brewer's *Reign of Henry VIII.*, ii. 347-51.

which made the most vital change in the relations of Church and State. This Parliament was simply filled with the King's nominees. The writs to the different constituencies went out, each accompanied with a private letter from some of the Council to the returning officer naming the persons whom they were to elect, and the result was manifest in the composition of the House of Commons as soon as it assembled. For, as a well-informed writer of the next generation had ascertained, "where in times past the Common House was usually furnished with grave and discreet townsmen, apparelled in comely and sage furred gowns, now might you have seen in this Parliament few others than royst[er]ing courtiers, serving men, parasites and flatterers of all sorts, lightly apparelled in short cloaks and swords, and as lightly furnished either with learning or honesty; so that when anything was moved against the spiritualty or the liberty of the Church, to that they hearkened diligently, giving straight their assents in anything that the King would require."[1] In this servile House bills began speedily to be framed against the clergy and their old immunities. Every grievance was raked up against them—excessive fees taken in spiritual courts, priests occupying farms, abbots keeping tan-houses and trafficking in wool, pluralities of benefices and non-residence. The real object of all these measures was perfectly apparent, and Fisher raised his voice on the subject in the House of Lords. This incident has been already referred to;[2] but it is right to give the story in greater detail. "My Lords," he said, "you see daily what bills come hither from the Common House, and all is to the destruction of the Church. For God's sake, see what a realm the kingdom of

What he said in the House of Lords;

[1] *Vie du Bienheureux Martyr, Jean Fisher*, edited by Fr. Van Ortroy, p. 216.

[2] See p. 297 *ante*.

Boheme was; and when the Church went down, then fell the glory of the kingdom. Now with the Commons is nothing but 'Down with the Church!' And all this, meseemeth, is for lack of faith only."

This, one would have thought, was an expression of opinion at which no one had any right to take offence, and being uttered in the House of Lords it might at least have been considered to be protected by parliamentary privilege. It is probable that even in the House of Commons there were not many who deeply resented it; but it was reported to them that the Bishop had declared "that all their doings were for lack of faith," and as we learn from Hall, the chronicler, "they took the matter grievously, for they imagined that the Bishop esteemed them as heretics, and so by his slanderous words would have persuaded the temporal lords to have restrained their consent to two bills which they before had passed." After a long debate the Speaker and thirty of the Commons were deputed to go to the King at York Place and lay their complaint before him, showing "what a dishonour to the King and the realm it was to say that they which were elected for the wisest men of all the shires, cities, and boroughs within the realm of England, should be declared in so noble and open presence to lack faith; which was equivalent to say that they were Infidels and no Christians, as ill as Turks or Saracens, so that what pain or study soever they took for the commonwealth, or what acts or laws soever they made or stablished, should be taken as laws made by Paynims and heathen people, and not worthy to be kept by Christian men. Wherefore he most humbly besought the King's Highness to call the said Bishop before him and to cause him to speak more discreetly of such a number as was in the Common House."[1] and how it was taken.

The idea that the House of Commons would ever

[1] Hall's *Chronicle*, p. 766.

have been bold enough thus to attack any member of the Upper House at all without prompting from some high quarter will not be readily entertained by any careful student of the actual working of the Constitution in past times; and we shall find pretty strong evidence, hereafter, of the way this particular House of Commons was moved to address the King when the King himself was particularly anxious that they should make a complaint to him. So it can hardly be a matter of doubt that this strange remonstrance was prompted by the King himself, and partly for personal reasons of his own. How exactly it suited his purpose and how skilfully he made the most of it we see plainly enough in the sequel, as described by the same pen:—

> The King was not well contented with the saying of the Bishop, yet he gently answered the Speaker that he would send for the Bishop and send them word what answer he made, and so departed again. After this the King sent for the Archbishop of Canterbury and six other bishops, and for the Bishop of Rochester also, and there declared to him the grudge of the Commons. To which the Bishop answered that he meant the doings of the Bohemians was for lack of faith, and not the doings of them that were in the Common House; which saying was confirmed by the bishops being present, which had him in great reputation; and so by that saying the King accepted his excuse, and therefore sent word to the Commons by Sir William Fitzwilliam, knight, treasurer of his household; which blind excuse pleased the Commons nothing at all.[1]

Our knowledge of the whole incident, it may be observed, is derived from a prejudiced source, unless we may use as a corrective a later account of the Bishop's speech in the old Life of Fisher lately edited anew by a learned Bollandist.[2] The chronicler Hall, whose words we have been quoting, is certainly as obsequious to the King as any member of that

[1] Hall, as above.

[2] Van Ortroy. See above.

Parliament could have been, and the old biographer, though he may have collected ampler and more authentic reports of what the Bishop actually did say, seems otherwise to have derived his information about the incident from Hall, and does not look behind the curtain. The Bishops certainly had quite as much reason to complain of the Commons as the Commons of Bishop Fisher; for the whole pretext of the bills now pressed forward was that the clergy were covetous, insatiable, cruel, and quite unwilling to reform abuses of themselves, whereas the true object was not to reform abuses at all, but simply to hamper the action of the clergy. But the farce was well played out. The King affected impartiality, listened to the complaints of the Commons, and while manifestly admitting (as if it was not his own suggestion) that the Bishop had been indiscreet, accepted his explanation, which he left it to the Commons still to declare unsatisfactory. We shall see that this was precisely the policy which he repeated in another case not very long afterwards. But we are concerned, at present, only with the case of Bishop Fisher.

It may undoubtedly be held that this so-called "Reformation Parliament" had found out some real blots in the Church's system, of which they were clamouring for the amendment. Nor is it necessary to deny that this was so. To suppose that the Church's system was free from abuses in the beginning of the sixteenth century would be absurd; and hardly less so, to suppose that this Parliament, controlled and guided by such influences as we know it to have been, did not fasten upon the weak points in the Church's armour with a view to its final overthrow. Hence it was easy for men like the chronicler Hall to sneer at prelates like Archbishop Warham and Bishop Fisher as defenders of abuses, and to insinuate, most untruly, that what they were chiefly

concerned about was the loss of their own fees and profits.[1] But the bishops themselves did not deny that some things were in need of reformation, and among the rest such things as fees. The point really in question was by what authority reformation should be made, and it is rather difficult to believe that the zeal of Parliament for purity was greater than that of the bishops themselves. Indeed it was manifestly the desire now to cripple the power of the bishops altogether, simply to render the Church more subservient to the Court. Pluralities might be bad things in themselves, though not perhaps without reasonable justification in some cases; but it was not for Parliament to make them illegal without reference to the Church authorities; and on this ground Fisher, after the Act was passed, disputed its validity and appealed to the Holy See in conjunction with two other bishops, Clerk of Bath and West of Ely. The King was offended, forbade any appeal to Rome on the matter, and had the three bishops arrested.[2] How long they remained in confinement for this matter we do not know; but it could not have been for any considerable time.

Had Parliament a right to reform the Church?

For even in January in the following year (1531) Fisher informed the Imperial Ambassador Chapuys that the King was endeavouring to suborn him and others who took the Queen's part by many foolish tales and inventions; among other things telling him that the Pope, whatever show he made of proceeding against the King, would favour him to the utmost of his power, and that his Holiness was secretly a great enemy of the Emperor, who wished to compel

[1] Hall says that the spiritual lords "made a fair face" to the Bill of Mortuaries, "saying that surely priests and curates took more than they should." That was "because it touched them little. But within two days after was sent up the bill concerning probates of testaments, at the which the Archbishop of Canterbury in especial, and all other bishops in general, both frowned and grunted, *for that touched their profit.*" And this he gives as the reason which prompted Bishop Fisher's speech!

[2] *Venetian Calendar*, iv. Nos. 629, 634.

him to convoke a General Council, and who had been intriguing to make Cardinal Campeggio pope. The efforts, Chapuys wrote at this time,[1] that the King was making to suborn people were incredible. But Fisher had soon to encounter things much more disquieting. For this was the very time of that extraordinary act of tyranny, the intimation to the clergy of England that they had as a body incurred a *præmunire* by having acknowledged the legatine authority of the now deceased Cardinal Wolsey. If that was any crime at all which was done with the King's approval, the laity were equally guilty; but though the King would have been willing enough to fine them also if he had dared, it was not the laity but the clergy whom he was most anxious to crush. Convocation attempted to buy off the King's displeasure by granting him a subsidy of £40,000 without confessing to any illegality on their part. But they little imagined where the policy of concession was ultimately to land them. They were told they must increase their offer to two and a half times the amount to secure their pardon. It was a most oppressive demand, but they complied, raising the grant to £100,044 : 8 : 8. Still, however, they made no confession of having given just cause of offence, but declared in the address by which the vote was conveyed, and in which, to show their loyalty, they carried adulation a great deal too far, that they had made the grant in consideration of the King's great services to the Church in defending the kingdom against the influx of a host of mischievous heretical books. They doubtless then believed that they had appeased the King's rapacity by a gift which would compel many of them to sell their chalices. But not so. The address in which they had made the grant was speedily brought back to them by certain judges and

[1] *L. P.*, v. 65.

privy councillors, who informed them that the King required certain clauses inserted, the first and most important of which recognised him as "Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy," while the fourth spoke of a general pardon for their transgressions against the penal laws—the very thing which they had been so anxious not to confess.

The demand simply amounted to this—that they were to place themselves entirely at the King's mercy, renouncing (at least by implication) even that degree of independence which they had always enjoyed in their ability to appeal on high questions to the Pope's decision. It was a breach with all past tradition and the repudiation of an authority believed by many, probably by most people, to be divine. Even by the most thoughtful men it was undoubtedly so regarded; while on the other hand, taking it only as a part of the policy of the whole Western Church to recognise a supreme authority at Rome, there was every reason to fear that religion and the commonweal would equally suffer by the isolation of a kingdom which had publicly cast off that authority. The clergy in Convocation were severely tried. This was the point on which the King was really the most urgent. Some other points he actually had to give up, a result which apparently was mainly due to Fisher's opposition. Even in this matter, after they had debated it at three separate sittings, he did somewhat moderate his demand, sending a message by Viscount Rochford, Anne Boleyn's brother, that the Convocation might, if they pleased, insert the words *post Deum* after *Supremum Caput*. But though the message was peremptory that no further discussion of the King's demand would be allowed, Convocation refused to concede the title even in this guarded form. Archbishop Warham, who presided, however, suggested another reservation, and that the words should run: "of the Church and Clergy of

Convocation and the Supremacy.

England, whose singular Protector, only and supreme lord, and, so far as the law of Christ allows, also Supreme Head, we acknowledge his Majesty to be." And even this was not willingly conceded. The proposal met with no response, till the Archbishop, uneasy at the situation, said "*Qui tacet consentire videtur*" (whoever is silent seems to consent). "Then we are all silent," said one voice, and the amendment was taken as carried. So the new title, with this reservation, having passed the Upper House, was afterwards approved by the Lower House also. The Convocation of York, weakened at this time by the vacancy of the Primacy, soon after felt compelled to do like the Southern Convocation.[1]

Fisher had been vexed at the weakness of most of the bishops. He had opposed the King in Convocation as much as he dared, and he was very ill at the result. Sir Thomas More also, though a layman, was extremely mortified, and was very anxious to resign the Great Seal, which he was not allowed to do till next year. No one approved of the Act,[2] but threats had actually been used that the Bishop of Rochester and his adherents would be thrown into the river if they did not consent to it; and, strange as such threats may appear, no one could be sure to what lengths the Court might go in instigating murder. A very unpleasant thing certainly did happen immediately afterwards in the Bishop's household, with which the King was particularly anxious to disavow complicity. A number of the Bishop's servants were taken seriously ill, and two of them died. On inquiry it was found that some porridge had been poisoned, and that the Bishop's cook, or, it may be, some

Servants of Fisher poisoned.

[1] The whole story of the grants and protests made by the two Convocations will be found in Wilkins, iii. 724-6, 742-5; *L. P.*, v. 62, 70, 112; Van Ortroy, 237-45.

[2] It appears that the clergy of both Provinces afterwards sent protests to the King that they did not mean to admit anything derogatory to the primacy of the See of Rome (Friedmann's *Anne Boleyn*, i. 142).

acquaintance of the cook who was a cook himself, had thrown in a powder which he professed to believe was only a purgative, meaning it for a practical joke. That it was an attempt on the Bishop's own life there seemed little reason to doubt; but happily he did not partake of the porridge, being so much occupied, it is said, in his study that he put off his own dinner that day. But the occurrence must have given rise to disagreeable suspicions against the Court; and the King, to disarm those suspicions, not only expressed strong indignation at the crime, but got the Parliament to pass a special Act, with retrospective effect, declaring that poisoning should be accounted high treason and the criminal boiled to death. The horrid sentence was carried out with even added brutality. The criminal, while in the cauldron, was locked in a chain and was pulled up and down till he was dead.[1]

It was next year (1532) in May that the famous "Submission of the Clergy" was obtained by the machinations of the Court. The first step taken was that great "Supplication" got up in the Commons by the industry of Thomas Cromwell, complaining that much discord had lately arisen between the King's subjects, spiritual and temporal, owing on the one side to novel opinions and on the other to the uncharitable way in which these were met by divers ordinaries and their commissaries in their examinations. This was a matter, forsooth, that might endanger the peace of the realm, and the evil was attributed to various specific causes, the chief of which was the power that the clergy had of making in Convocation laws and constitutions which the laity were compelled to obey, without the consent either of themselves or of the Crown. That the House of Commons should have been encouraged, or rather influenced, to go out of its way by preparing a "supplication" of this sort,

[1] Chapuys to Charles V. in *L. P.*, v. 120; *Venetian Calendar*, iv. No. 668; Statute 22 Hen. VIII., c. 9; *Greyfriars' Chronicle*, 35; Van Ortroy, 224-6.

which was not a bill to go up to the Lords but was intended for direct presentation to the King, was significant of the plans now being hatched in high quarters. The lawyer St. German was writing, just about this time, his treatise on the same text, "concerning the division between the spiritualty and temporalty"; and how little that "division" caused anxiety to any one not anxious to promote it was soon made apparent by the supplicating Commons themselves. The Supplication was solemnly presented to the King by the Speaker and a deputation from the House, who at the same time begged His Majesty to consider their long attendance at Parliament at great inconvenience and cost to themselves, and hoped he would soon release them by a dissolution, that they might return to their several homes. The King returned a very grave answer that it did not become a King to be light of credence, and he would hear the party accused; but though he felt for their long attendance they must await an answer to their complaints. Moreover, he had sent them a bill (a very unpopular one) concerning the rights of the Crown about wards, which the Lords had already passed, and which he hoped they would pass likewise.

The Supplication of the Commons presented.

So Parliament had to reassemble after Easter, and the Commons passed under pressure the Act for the restraint of Annates, well known to students of English Church history, though they could not be induced to pass the bill about wards. On the 30th April the King sent for the Speaker and others to receive "the Answer of the Ordinaries" to their Supplication, which had been drawn up after much discussion in Convocation. With a curious pretence of impartiality he addressed the deputation: "We think their answer will smally satisfy you, for it seemeth to us very slender. You be a great sort of wise men. I doubt not but you will look circumspectly on the matter, and we will be indifferent between you."

Answer of the Ordinaries.

How the Commons acted on the cue thus given them is sufficiently shown by the fact that a further answer from the clergy was extracted, which emboldened the King to press them further still, laying before them three articles by which they were to give away entirely their right of making ordinances for the Church. Bishop Fisher was apparently very ill at the time, but the Convocation in this great crisis sent a deputation to confer with him at his own house. Finally the clergy succumbed and delivered in their "Submission."[1] Three days before this result was achieved, Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador, writes in anticipation of it: "Churchmen will be of less account than shoemakers, who have the power of assembling and making their own statutes."[2] But the King's view was that the clergy had hitherto been only half his subjects,[3] because the bishops took an oath to the Pope as well as to himself. He intended henceforth to be quite uncontrolled, even by monitors whose duty it was to proclaim the principles of right and wrong.

Submission of the clergy.

Fisher, nevertheless, within about three weeks after the submission of the clergy, was bold enough to preach in favour of Queen Katharine, and shut the mouths of all who would have advocated the divorce. That he incurred risk of imprisonment or injury by doing so was no secret to any one.[4] Next year, accordingly (1533), came new troubles, for the King was now determined to push matters forward. The death of Warham in August had enabled him to fill the see of Canterbury with a serviceable instrument in Cranmer, hitherto chaplain to the Boleyn family, who, though appalled at his own elevation, could not refuse it. The King married Anne secretly in January. Parliament met again after prorogation in February, and in spite of an intimation to him and two other

[1] Hall, pp. 784-5, 788.
[2] *L. P.*, v. 1013.
[3] Hall, p. 788.
[4] Chapuys to Charles V., 21st June 1532, in *L. P.*, v. 1109.

bishops who favoured Katharine, Fisher took his place in the House of Lords.[1] Bills passed in Parliament which he did not like; but, worse still, Convocation was intimidated to vote as the King desired that marriage with a deceased brother's wife was a thing against the law of nature for which no dispensation was valid. On this subject bishops and other divines voted together. There were 75 present[2] with 197 proxies; but only 19 voted for the negative, and Fisher was the only one who dared to argue the question on that side boldly. He was arrested the very next day, which was Palm Sunday, the 6th April. But his confinement at this time would seem to have been tolerably easy; for he was committed to the care of Bishop Gardiner, and three days later sent to reside at one of his own places, with injunctions not to go more than a mile beyond it.[3] About the 13th June he was set free, and perhaps owed his liberation partly to the fact that Bishop Tunstall had just maintained the same cause as stoutly in the Convocation of York as he had done in the Convocation of Canterbury. The King, it seems, could not afford to put Tunstall in prison, as he could not find another man to keep the Borders in quiet so effectually as the Bishop of Durham.[4]

Arrest of Fisher.

But meanwhile the King had accomplished his main object. His way had been smoothed both by Parliament and Convocation, especially as Parliament, much against the grain, had been compelled to pass the great statute forbidding future appeals to Rome. Cranmer, having by this time obtained his bulls

[1] "The King has required that three bishops who held the Queen's side should be excused from it, and he has deputed as proctors those who pleased him" (Chapuys to Charles V., 21st Feb. 1533, in *L. P.*). There can be no doubt Fisher was one of the three.

[2] In the record itself it is stated that there were 66 present and 197 proxies. But see the lists and numbers at the end in Fiddes' *Wolsey*, Coll. No. 90; and in Pocock's *Records of the Reformation*, ii. 446-59.

[3] *Venetian Calendar*, iv. No. 870.

[4] *L. P.*, VI. 653.

and become Archbishop of Canterbury, cited Queen Katharine before him at Dunstable, and declared her contumacious for not appearing, and within a fortnight gave sentence that her marriage with the King was invalid. Then five days later, on the 28th May, as we have shown above, he held a secret inquiry at Lambeth, and pronounced another sentence that the King had been lawfully married to Anne Boleyn—on what day, or before whom, or under what circumstances there was no record whatever.[1] On the 1st June, which was Whitsunday, Anne was crowned as Queen with great magnificence, after processions by water and through the streets on previous days, but with a marked absence of enthusiasm among the people, who never loved her.[2]

Cranmer finds the King's first marriage invalid, the second lawful.

It was convenient that Fisher had been got out of the way till this was over. He was now secretly convinced, and found means to let the Imperial ambassador know it, that the only hope of rescuing not only Katharine but England from a wicked and degrading tyranny would be in the Emperor's interference to execute papal censures, which were very soon issued after the news reached Rome. But papal censures were not allowed to be published in England, and it did not suit the Emperor's policy, even for the honour of his aunt, to send an invading army, however assured he might be by good judges that it would be welcomed by the population of England itself.[3] Nevertheless the King and Court were in great fear of what might follow from the outrageous steps lately taken; and we shall, perhaps, not be far wrong in thinking

[1] According to Harpsfield (*Pretended Divorce*, 234-5) the marriage ceremony was performed at Whitehall secretly before day by Roland Lee, who was immediately afterwards made Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, in the presence of only three other persons whom he names, the King pretending that he had a papal licence which he could not then conveniently get at. This was perhaps something like the truth, for Harpsfield's special information is generally very accurate.

[2] *L. P.*, VI. 583-5, 601, 653.

[3] *L. P.*, VI. 1164, 1249.

that fear had much to do with the proceedings presently set on foot with regard to the celebrated Nun of Kent, Elizabeth Barton, whom Cranmer was instructed to send for and examine in August.[1]

Elizabeth Barton.

This Holy Maid, as she was called, had been famous for many years, even for some time before the King's desire for a divorce was talked about. And it would not only be a harsh judgment, but very unjust, to say that she was an impostor from the first.[2] Some peculiar physical infirmities, trances, and divinations gave her a repute for holiness, which on investigation before Archbishop Warham seemed fairly justified. She was placed as a nun at St. Sepulchre's in Canterbury, denounced sin freely, sympathised with the injured Queen Katharine (who prudently declined to see her though the Nun had been most anxious to be allowed to come to her presence), and warned the King that he would lose his throne within a month if he married Anne Boleyn. When he had actually married her and got her crowned at Whitsuntide in this year, she evidently was staggered. Even her trances failed to give her a certain answer what was to become of the wicked pair. But she had a partial answer then, and Cranmer, who, as Archbishop, was instructed to question her, affected to believe in her like Warham, and allowed her to go to Court-up-Street and have another trance that she might commit herself more fully. The complete revelation apparently was that the King would shortly lose his kingdom, and that she had seen the place prepared for him in hell.[3]

[1] *L. P.*, VI. 869, 887, 967.

[2] Her boldness before the King himself is strongly in her favour, for it appears that she used plain enough speech to him in a personal interview even in 1532; and that on this account the judges in 1533 were against proceeding against her for treason, as she had concealed nothing from the King that concerned him (*L. P.*, VI. p. 577).

[3] *L. P.*, VI. 967, 1445. Besides Chapuys's letters written at the time and the Act of Attainder against the Nun and her adherents, 25 Hen. VIII. c. 12 (which, of course, is one-sided), and Hall's *Chronicle* (which is much the same), it is well to take into account the story of Elizabeth Barton given by Lambarde in his *Perambulation of Kent*, pp. 170-75 (ed. 1826), which is partly founded on the contemporary pamphlet of Edward Thwaytes.

I am not concerned here to tell the whole story of this unhappy maid. She threatened the King once to his own face with the vengeance of God if he married Anne; but it would seem that her importance in his eyes was chiefly as a means of discovering how many had spoken to her or sympathised with her opinions. Many arrests were made a month after her examination before Cranmer; papers were searched, and the Attorney-General did his best to implicate as many people as possible.[1] A great case of conspiracy was to be made out, but the accused were not brought to trial. A Bill of Attainder in Parliament in the spring of 1534 was a much simpler process.

The Bill of Attainder.

We come now to the period when the story of Bishop Fisher's troubles has most in common with those of Sir Thomas More; for they were both at first included in the Bill of Attainder against the Nun of Kent and her adherents. The Bishop had fallen seriously ill before Advent, and was obliged to write to Cromwell for leave of absence from Parliament in the session which began on the 15th January 1534.

Bishop Fisher.

A fortnight after that date he was still suffering from a distressing cough which began with a fever, and from swollen legs and feet which gave him severe pain and made travelling quite impossible. There was no difficulty about his excuse, for the King himself had intimated not only to him, but to Bishop Tunstall and several others who were likely to oppose his wishes, that they had better stay away. Neither royal promises nor menaces were spared to keep Parliament in thorough discipline. But the Bishop's weak health did not protect him from bullying letters from Cromwell accusing him of unkind feelings towards the King; which grew all the more censorious when he endeavoured to defend himself, insomuch

[1] *L. P.*, VI. 1148, 1149, 1169, 1460, 1464-71. Compare also, as to the way the prosecution was got up, Nos. 1369, 1370, 1381, and 1382.

that Cromwell actually reproached him for some reticence on what was called "the King's great matter," when he had really sought to avoid giving further offence; "the which," he sadly wrote, "I would be loth to do, any more largely than I have done,—not that I condemn any other men's conscience; their conscience may save them, and mine must save me." Yet while the Bill of Attainder was being drawn up against him in his absence Cromwell rated him for having sent his chaplain to the Nun, and told him he had made a very poor excuse when he said it was to ascertain whether her revelations were of God or no. In short, it was inexcusable to perform what was considered part of a bishop's duty, and that he had taken the wrong means of testing her sanctity appeared clearly from his having given six reasons which seemed *a priori* in her favour.[1]

The official theory was that the Nun's revelations were nothing but a traitorous attempt to destroy the King—a theory which the judges, when consulted, had declined to support, as she herself had told the King to his face the very worst that she said had been revealed to her.[2] But at length the poor woman, sorely tried, seems to have lost confidence in her own inspiration—perhaps because the King had married Anne in defiance of her warnings and had not at once been dethroned. She accordingly made a confession that she had been guilty of imposture.[3]

[1] *L. P.*, VII. 116, 121, 136, 238, 239.

[2] *L. P.*, VI. 1445. It is clear the judges were hard pressed to withdraw their objection. See No. 1460.

[3] She made some confession before the 16th Nov. 1533, and apparently repeated it in public on the scaffold on which she and her adherents were placed beside St. Paul's on the 23rd (*L. P.*, VI. 1433, 1460, and VII. 72, p. 29). She probably then saw through some of her own hallucinations and accused herself. The story of her having seen the host taken out of the priest's hands at Calais when the King was there, and brought to her by angels to receive, might have been a dream reported of her as a reality. But it looks rather as if she had connived at the fabrication by a monk of Canterbury of the letter stated to have been written in heaven by Mary Magdalene. The confession which she made just before her death, as reported in Hall's *Chronicle* (p. 814), has a very suspicious look of having been officially made up.

Indeed, it is to be feared that in some things she had not been truthful, though the case against her is not so strong that much might not be said to weaken it, were it not that Sir Thomas More, whose good opinion of her at first made allowance for the possibility of a good many lies being told of her, was finally convinced of her dishonesty.[1] Her confession, however, was a great matter for the King's purpose. Those who had actually favoured her were included in the bill as conspirators, and those who had ever lent an ear to her, even if they had done no more, were also included as guilty of misprision—at least, when they were men like Fisher and More, whose known dislike of the King's divorce from Katharine had a special influence from their high position and unbending integrity. In his censorious letters to Fisher, Cromwell shamefully insinuated that matters would have been easier for the Bishop if he had submitted to the King and besought his pardon — the very course which the King, no doubt, desired in order to make out that he was guilty by his own confession. But Fisher was not the man to accuse himself unjustly, and he wrote to the assembled Lords in Parliament stating his own case and requesting that he might be heard in his own defence or some one for him.[2]

More and the Bill.

More's name also was included in the Bill of Attainder on account of his communications with the Nun. On learning the fact he wrote to Cromwell[3] expressing surprise, as he had given full explanations

[1] *L. P.*, VII. 287.

[2] *L. P.*, VII. 240.

[3] Shortly before hearing it, he had been obliged to write to Cromwell to show his innocence on another point. At Christmas 1533 the Council had put out a "book of articles" in justification of the King's second marriage (see *L. P.*, VI. p. 634; VII. 1), and it was reported that More had written an answer to it and given it to Rastell to print. He denied that he had sent any book to press since the "book of articles" had appeared. What gave rise to the suspicion was that his last book printed by Rastell, which was in answer to "a nameless heretic" (really Tyndale) on "the Supper of the Lord," had been post-dated by the printer 1534, though really printed off before Christmas. See More's *English Works*, p. 1422.

in former letters, and desiring to have a copy of the bill that he might declare his truth to the King himself as he was confident of his innocence.[1] The King declined to give him an audience, but appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury (Cranmer), the Lord Chancellor (Audeley), the Duke of Norfolk, and Cromwell to call him before them.

"At which time I," writes his son-in-law Roper, "thinking that I had a good and fit opportunity, earnestly advised him to labor to those lords for the help of his discharge out of the Parliament bill. Who answered me he would. And at his coming before them according to their appointment, they entertained him very friendly, willing him to sit down with them, which in no wise he would. Then began the lord Chancellor to declare unto him how many ways the King had showed his love and favor towards him,—how fain he would have had him continue in his office,—how glad he would have been to have heaped more benefits upon him; and finally how he could ask no worldly honor nor profit at his Highness' hands that were likely to be denied him; hoping, by declaration of the King's kindness and affection towards him, to provoke him to recompense his Grace with the like again, and unto those things which the Parliament, the Bishops, and the Universities had already passed to yield his consent. To this Sir Thomas More mildly made answer, saying, 'No man living is there, my Lords, that would with better will do the thing that should be acceptable to the King's Highness than I, which must needs confess his manifold goodness and bountiful benefits most liberally bestowed on me. Howbeit I verily hoped I should never have heard of this matter more, considering that I have from time to time alway from the beginning so plainly and truly declared my mind unto his Grace, which his Highness ever seemed to me, like a most gracious prince, very well to accept, never minding, as he said, to molest me more therewith. Since which time any further thing that was able to move me to any change could I never find; and if I could, there is none in all the world that would have been gladder of it than I.' Many things more were there of like sort uttered on both

He explains his past relations with the King.

[1] More's *English Works*, p. 1423. The letter to Cromwell, *L. P.* VII. 287, was evidently one of the former letters referred to, and should have been placed earlier in the volume.

sides. But in the end, when they saw they could by no manner of persuasion remove him from his former determination, then began they more terribly to touch him, telling him that the King's Highness had given in commandment, if they could by no gentleness win him, in his name with his great ingratitude to charge him,— that never was there servant to his Sovereign so villanous, nor subject to his prince so traitorous as he. For he by subtle sinister sleights, most unnaturally procuring and provoking him to set forth a book[1] of the Assertion of the Seven Sacraments and maintenance of the Pope's authority, had caused him, to his dishonor throughout all Christendom, to put a sword in the Pope's hand to fight against himself. When they had thus laid forth all the terrors they could imagine against him, 'My Lords,' quoth he, 'these terrors be arguments for children and not for me. But to answer to that wherewith you do chiefly burden me, I believe the King's Highness, of his honor, will never lay that to my charge, for none is there that can in that point say in my excuse more than his Highness himself; who right well knoweth that I was never procurer nor counsellor of his Majesty thereunto, but after it was finished, by his Grace's appointment and consent of the makers of the same, I was only a sorter out and placer of the principal matters therein contained. Wherein when I found the Pope's authority highly advanced and with strong arguments mightily defended, I said unto his Grace, "I must put your Highness in remembrance of one thing, and that is this. The Pope, as your Grace knoweth, is a prince as you are, and in league with all other Christian princes. It may so hereafter fall out that your Grace and he may vary upon some points of leagues, whereupon may grow breach of amity and war between you both. I think it best, therefore, that that place be amended, and his authority more slenderly touched."—"Nay," quoth his Grace, "that shall it not; we are so much bounden to the See of Rome that we cannot do too much honor to it." Then did I further put him in remembrance of the Statute of *Præmunire*, whereby a good part of the Pope's pastoral cure here was pared away. To that answered his Highness, "Whatsoever impediment be to the contrary, we will set forth that authority to the uttermost, for we receive from that See our Crown Imperial"; which I never heard of before till his Grace told

[1] Henry VIII.'s book against Luther, published in 1521.

it me with his own mouth. So that I trust, when his Grace shall be once truly informed of this, and call to his gracious remembrance my doings in that behalf, his Highness will never speak of it more but clear me therein thoroughly himself.'

"And thus displeasantly departed they. Then took Sir Thomas More his boat towards his house at Chelsea, wherein by the way he was very merry; and for that I was nothing sorry, hoping that he had gotten himself discharged out of the Parliament bill. When he was landed and come home, then walked we twain alone in his garden together; where I, desirous to know how he had sped, said 'I trust, Sir, that all is well because that you be so merry.' 'It is so indeed, son Roper, I thank God,' quoth he. 'Are you then put out of the Parliament bill?' quoth I. 'By my trothe, son Roper, I never remembered it.' 'Never remembered it, Sir?' said I, 'a cause that toucheth yourself so near, and us all for your sake? I am sorry to hear it, for I verily trusted, when I saw you so merry, that all had been well.' Then said he, 'Wilt thou know, son Roper, why I was so merry?' 'That would I gladly, Sir,' said I. 'In good faith, I rejoiced, son,' said he, 'that I had given the Devil a foul fall, and that with those lords I had gone so far as without great shame I could never go back again.' At which words waxed I very sad; for though himself liked it well, yet liked it me but a little."[1]

Such was the spirit of this noble-minded martyr. It was clearly impossible to tell the story in other words than those of his affectionate son-in-law. The King, undoubtedly, was loth to sacrifice More if he could only have got him corrupted, so blandishments were used in the first place and threatenings after. But all in vain. Sir Thomas had given the Devil a foul fall, and was ready to abide the consequences. His boldness, however, won the day in this matter after all; for though the King, according to Roper, was extremely incensed, and determined that the bill should proceed against him, the Lords were no less determined that he should be heard in his own defence, or that his name should be put out of the bill entirely, otherwise the whole bill would be thrown

[1] Roper's *Life of More* (Singer's ed.), pp. 78-84.

out. The King was not easily turned from his purpose, and talked of being present at the passing of the bill himself; but even lords so subservient as Audeley and the rest on their knees implored him to refrain, else he might sustain a deeper humiliation in witnessing the defeat of the measure he was so desirous of having passed. For in the matter of the Nun, More was not only shown clearly to be innocent, but it was felt that his conduct had been in the highest degree loyal and praiseworthy.[1] The Peers, in fact, durst not for their own security pass anything so iniquitous.[2]

More wrote on the 5th March an earnest appeal to the King not to do him injustice on "sinister information," and on the same day wrote to Cromwell a full and candid account of the position he had taken up on matters connected with the King's marriage from the very first mooting of the question, which was never more than that of an honest counsellor who did not even give an opinion uncalled for. By the 28th of the month his friends rejoiced to think that he was "clearly discharged of his trouble."[3] But More's own view of the matter was far from sanguine. The news of his name having been put out of the bill was despatched from Westminster by Roper by a servant to Chelsea, where his wife was staying with her father. "In faith, Meg," was Sir Thomas's comment, "*quod differtur non aufertur.*"

His name is put out of the Bill.

Bishop Fisher's case was different. He did not experience even a momentary respite from trouble. Indeed, it seems rather as if the Bill of Attainder had been specially devised to trouble him and not the chief delinquents. Of course, the poor

[1] Roper, 84, 85.

[2] The most specious charge against More was that he had actually written a letter to the Nun; which was true enough. But the very object of the letter (written when he had a good opinion of her character) was to caution her against speaking too freely to any person of "princes' affairs or the state of the realm," pointing to the example of the Duke of Buckingham as a warning.

[3] *L. P.*, VII. 384.

Nun and her adherents were condemned—without one of them being heard in his own defence (a point on which the Lords actually desired to know the King's wishes[1]); but Fisher and his chaplain, Dr. Adeson, and a few others were only found guilty of misprision for concealing from the King things which they had no occasion to tell him, as His Majesty himself knew them perfectly well. Cromwell had drawn up two lists beforehand with very significant comments. One contained the names of Elizabeth Barton and six others, of whom he wrote, "These by the Act shall be attainted of high treason and suffer death"; the other contained "John, Bishop of Rochester," and five others, "to be attainted of misprision, suffer imprisonment at the King's will, and lose all their goods."[2] It was quite to be expected that all would be done according to the programme; but, in truth, there was one exception. On the 20th April the Nun with two Grey Friars, two monks, and one secular priest were drawn from the Tower to Tyburn, where they were hanged and beheaded. But Richard Master, parson of Aldington, one of the Nun's six "accomplices" on Cromwell's first list, was respited, and obtained a pardon in July. He had been her parish clergyman when she first had trances. On the day of the executions a correspondent of Lord Lisle's writes from London: "This day most part of the city was sworn to the King and his legitimate issue by the Queen's Grace now had and hereafter to come."[3] The executions, doubtless, had considerable

Executions of the Nun and her adherents.

[1] The bill had been read a third time in the House of Lords on the 6th March: "Qua quidem billa sic lecta, memorati Domini esse consentaneum excogitaverunt, ad cognoscendum an cum Regio animo quadrare potest ut Thomas More, miles, ceterique in dicta billa secum nominati, except. Epus. Rofficien. egritudine gravis (cujus responsum per suas literas cognoscitur) coram Dominis in Regio Senatu secus nuncupat. *The Stere Chamber*, accersantur ad audiendum quid pro se ipsis dicere possint." (*Journals of the Lords*, i. 72.) The Lords seem to have shown wonderfully little independence—except of the rules of grammar.

[2] *L. P.*, VII. 70.

[3] *L. P.*, VII. 522.

effect in making men recognise Anne Boleyn as Queen, and her coming offspring as legitimate.

Acts against the Pope's authority.

Sentence had been pronounced at Rome on the 23rd March that the King's marriage with Katharine was a valid one. But of course Henry had anticipated nothing else, and was all the more busy in getting Parliament to pass Acts against the Pope's authority, and for the succession of his children by Anne Boleyn. At the prorogation, indeed, news of the sentence not having yet come, the anti-papal Acts were left provisional till midsummer, when the King might confirm them if the Pope were yet compliant. But the Act of Succession at once received the royal assent, and just before the prorogation on the 30th March an oath to observe it was taken by every member of either House. Then the people generally were called on to swear to it, which they did with great reluctance, under terror of the penalties enjoined.[1] News of the sentence reached England just before Easter, and, notwithstanding his affected indifference, gave Henry real disquiet. He got the preachers for Easter Day to revile the Pope in terms particularly opprobrious, and at once caused the anti-papal statutes to be published.[2] Moreover, he had just obtained from the Convocation of Canterbury an opinion that the Pope had no more power in England than any other foreign bishop. This declaration was also agreed to five weeks later by the Convocation of York, and Cranmer got the clergy generally to subscribe it in a visitation of his province. Such a concession, however, was not to be expected from the Orders of Friars, who were exempt from episcopal

[1] Chapuys writes on the 22nd April: "The King thinks he has got his subjects more under command by making them individually swear to maintain the laws made against the Queen and Princess in favour of this second marriage, but it only irritates them the more, while they are at present in such fear that there is neither small nor great who dare speak or grumble in any way. But when the time comes, every one will declare himself."—*L. P.*, VII. p. 214.

[2] *L. P.*, VII. 434, 469.

control. So they were put under two general visitors to keep them in subordination.

Weak as he still was in health, Fisher left Rochester after Easter in obedience to a summons to appear at Lambeth to be examined by royal commissioners. A touching account is given of his journey in an early biography; how the citizens of Rochester, whom he blessed at parting, bewailed his departure, crying, "Woe worth them that were the cause of his trouble," and how he dismounted from his horse on Shooter's Hill, and dined in the open air, as he had long been accustomed, by advice of his physicians, to keep regular hours of diet. But another incident, more pathetic still, we learn from Cardinal Pole, who says that while on this journey he swooned from weakness.[1] This doubtless occurred before he took refreshment. On Monday, 13th April, he appeared before the Commissioners, the chief of whom were Archbishop Cranmer, Lord Chancellor Audeley, and Cromwell. Sir Thomas More and several others besides (all clergymen except himself) attended the same day upon summons,[2] and how many were heard before the Bishop is not certain. Sir Thomas was the first who was called, and he was required to take the oath to the Succession Act. He asked leave to see the oath and the Act likewise. After carefully perusing them he said he would not refuse to swear to the succession, but he could not conscientiously take the oath proposed to him. The Commissioners told him they were sorry, and, showing him the roll with

More called on to swear to the Succession Act;

[1] "Cum Londinum accersitus esset ut in carcere conderetur, in itinere ad aliquod tempus ob virium imbecillitatem animo defecisse" (Pole, *Pro Ecclesiastica Unitatis defensione*, lib. iii. f. 116 v., cited by Van Ortroy, p. 279 *note*).

[2] Stapleton relates that the summons was served on More the previous day (which by error he calls Palm Sunday instead of Low Sunday), when he was at the house of John Clement after hearing the sermon at St. Paul's along with Roper. The messenger beat at the door when they were all at dinner, and the summons created consternation in many of the family, whom he reproved for their weakness, commending those who bore the tidings well. —*Tres Thomæ*, 304, 305 (Colon. Agripp. 1612).

the subscriptions of the Lords and Commons, said that he had been the first to refuse the oath, and warned him of the bad effect it would have upon the King. As he refused to swear, without blaming any who had taken the oath, he was ordered down into the garden, but remained in an old burnt chamber that overlooked it "because of the heat." He saw Latimer and other doctors and chaplains of the Archbishop very merry in the garden, while Dr. Nicholas Wilson, once the King's confessor, emerged from his examination before the Lords and was conveyed to the Tower. But after a good many oaths had been taken, More was called in again, reproached for his obstinacy, and asked to declare any special part of the oath that was against his conscience. He replied that, as he had already said, it would only exasperate the King further if he told his reasons; but, to avoid offence, if he might have the King's licence, he would declare his objections in writing, and promise upon oath that if any man answered them in a way to satisfy his conscience, he would take the principal oath also. The Lords said that the King's licence, even under letters patent, would not serve against the statute. But they, and especially Cranmer, made use of many subtle arguments to bring him to compliance, which, however, he quietly answered.[1]

It was doubtless in the hope of still bending him to the King's purpose that he was then committed to the custody of Abbot Boston of Westminster, who was one of the Lords who had tried to remove his scruples.[2] But his mind had considered everything, even before he was brought before the Lords that morning. He had taken his boat at Chelsea after preparing himself for the coming trial by going to church, being confessed, and receiving the sacrament. He had bidden wife and children farewell, not allowing

[1] More's *English Works*, pp. 1428-30.
[2] Roper's *More*, p. 88; *L. P.*, VII. 502.

them as usual to accompany him to his embarkation, and he took with him none but Roper and four servants in the boat.

"Wherein sitting sadly awhile" (I again quote Roper's own words), "at the last he suddenly rounded me in the ear, and said, 'Son Roper, I thank our Lord, the field is won.' What he meant thereby I then wist not; yet loth to seem ignorant, I answered, 'Sir, I am therefor very glad.' But, as I conjectured afterward, it was for that the love he had to God wrought in him so effectually that he conquered all his carnal affection utterly."[1]

Even without such solemn preparation, he had been facing the inevitable for some time. Once, when in company with the Duke of Norfolk, the Duke had said to him, "By the mass, Mr. More, it is perilous striving with princes; therefore I would wish you somewhat to incline to the King's pleasure. For, by God's Body, Mr. More, *Indignatio Principis mors est.*" "Is that all, my Lord?" answered More. "Then, in good faith, the difference between your Grace and me is but this, that I shall die to-day and you to-morrow."[2]

More was the only layman called in before the Lords, and he was heard first of all. Bishop Fisher was called in later, and, being asked to take the oath, desired to see it and consider its language. On consultation the Commissioners gave him four or five days to think over it, and he retired to his own episcopal residence in Lambeth Marsh, in the custody of the Archbishop of Canterbury. On the 16th or 17th[3] both he and Sir Thomas were brought before

Fisher also called on to do so.

[1] Roper's *More*, pp. 87, 88.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 86

[3] If we may trust a letter of Chapuys, dated the 16th April, he had heard that morning that Fisher and More, and others also, had been sent to the Tower for refusing to swear. But the date may be an error. On the 17th John Husee writes to Lord Lisle that Fisher is in the custody of my Lord of Canterbury, and More in that of the Abbot of Westminster. But he again may have been behindhand in his information. Cranmer writes from Croydon on the 17th of their refusal to swear; but this must have been after their

the Commissioners again, and each separately answered that he could not take the whole oath as it stood, but each was willing, if it would satisfy the King, to swear to the same thing in a different form. It thus appeared that it was only the preamble that troubled them; and Cranmer, writing from Croydon soon afterwards, benevolently urged that it would be a great gain to the King's purpose if two such eminent men, over-scrupulous as they seemed to be, could be got to swear to the succession apart from the preamble, which disparaged the King's previous marriage and the authority of the See of Rome. Cromwell showed the Archbishop's letter to the King, who, however, was not to be persuaded. His unfavourable reply is attributed by Roper to Queen Anne's "importunate clamor," and we hardly do injustice to the upstart Queen in believing that he is right. At the same time the reasons given by the King to Cranmer against the compromise were certainly, from his point of view, more weighty than those advanced by the Archbishop in its favour. It would encourage others to refuse the whole oath, and might be taken "as a confirmation of the Bishop of Rome's authority," and "a reprobation of the King's second marriage."[1]

More and Fisher lodged in the Tower.

After their several hearings, More and Fisher were, each in his turn, conveyed to the Tower. More's spirits had not forsaken him. Richard Cromwell, the nephew of the King's great minister, Thomas Cromwell, had charge of his conveyance thither, and advised him to send home his gold chain to his wife or children. "Nay, sir," he said, "that I will not;

second examination, which was followed by their immediate committal to the Tower. It must also be noted that, according to Roper, More was committed to the custody of the Abbot for four days, which would only be fully expired on the 17th, but may have meant from the 13th to the 16th, both days included. Bridgett (*Life of More*, 358) says his committal to the Tower was the result of the King's unfavourable answer to Cranmer's letter, which, however, is by no means certain. They were probably in the Tower already when Cranmer wrote.

[1] *L. P.*, VII. 499, 450.

for if I were taken on the field by my enemies I would they should somewhat fare the better for me." On his landing he was received by the Lieutenant of the Tower, and the Porter, according to custom with state prisoners, demanded his upper garment. "Here it is," he said, and took off his cap, adding that he was sorry it was no better. "No, sir," said the Porter, "I must have your gown." When conducted by the Lieutenant to his lodging he called his servant, John à Wood, to attend on him,—a man who could neither read nor write, "and sware him before the Lieutenant that if he should hear or see him at any time speak *or write* any matter against the King, Council, or the State of the Realm, he should open it to the Lieutenant, that the Lieutenant might incontinent reveal it to the Council."[1]

Bishop Fisher could scarcely have taken the matter so easily. A day or two after his committal to the Tower he was visited by Bishop Roland Lee, who wrote of him to Cromwell as follows:—

> Pleaseth you to be advertised that I have been with my lord of Rochester, who is as ye left him, that is to say, ready to make his oath for the succession and to swear never to mell more in disputation of the validity of the matrimony, or invalidity with the lady Dowager, but that utterly to refuse. But as for the case of the prohibition Levitical, his conscience is so knit that he cannot put it out from him what so ever betide him. And yet he will and doth firmly profess his allegiance to Our Sovereign Lord the King during his life. Truly the man is nigh gone, and doubtless cannot continue unless the King and his Council be merciful to him, for the body cannot bear the clothes on his back; As knoweth God who preserve you. In haste, scribbled by
>
> Your own most bounden,
>
> Roland Co. et Lich. Electus et Confirmatus.[2]

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[1] Roper's *Life*, pp. 89, 90.

[2] MS. Cott., Cleop. E vi. 165. The writer was confirmed Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield on the 16th April and was consecrated on the 19th (Le Neve). This letter must have been written after the 16th and before the 19th.

Fisher's feebleness.

The pitiful account of Fisher's condition given in this letter accords well with what Pole wrote of him next year after his martyrdom. Who that knew Fisher, he asks, would have expected that a man so old and feeble in health and slender in body could have endured imprisonment even for one month? Pole himself, who was then in Italy, having got leave to go abroad three years before the Bishop's death, hardly believed at that time that even with care and good treatment in his own house he would have lived more than one year longer.[1] Yet here was the aged prelate, who had been forced to take a painful journey up to London, and who had fainted by the way, committed to the Tower for not taking an oath to the succession in a particular form (though no form had been fixed by the statute), and hardly able to bear the clothes on his back. The Bell Tower, to which he was committed, was perhaps the least uncomfortable prison in the old grim fortress; but even here he suffered acutely, especially months afterwards when the winter came on, unable to get comfortable clothing or even suitable food for a delicate stomach like his, except by the self-sacrificing attentions of his own brother, who was at much expense on his account.[2]

Just after he was shut up in the Tower, the King sent two of his own minions, apparently Richard Cromwell[3] and John Gostwick, to Rochester to seize the Bishop's goods. They entered the episcopal palace, turned out the servants, and made an inventory of the goods which is still extant,[4] appropriat-

[1] See Pole's book *de Unitate* (abstract in *L. P.*, XI. 975).

[2] See the Bishop's letter to Cromwell of 22nd Dec. 1534, printed in the *Archæologia*, vol. XXV., and elsewhere.

[3] The old biographer says, "Sir Richard Morrison of his privie chamber, and one Gostwicke" (Van Ortroy, p. 315). But Sir Richard Morison did not come to England till after Fisher's death, and it is certain that Richard Cromwell and Gostwick were employed together immediately afterwards in the similar case of Lord Dacres (*L. P.*, VII. 663.)

[4] *L. P.*, VII. 557.

ing, however, in what may be called the official fashion of those days, the greater part to themselves, with *douceurs* to the servants. They rifled and scattered his fine collection of books, of which they packed in "32 great pipes" what they did not care to steal. They seized even a chest of money containing a sum of £300 left by a former Bishop of Rochester to meet possible exigencies of the See, to which Fisher himself had added £100 more. But they were disappointed when they came to a coffer containing, as they thought, very special treasure; for which reason they brought special witnesses before they broke it open, to see that the King was not defrauded. It was deposited in the Bishop's oratory, to which no one usually came but himself, and was very securely locked. On being opened, however, it was found to contain, not gold or silver, but a hair shirt and two or three whips, "wherewith he used full often to punish himself, as some of his chaplains and servants would report, that were about him and curiously marked his doings." It was only owing to the haste of his departure that the Bishop had left this chest behind him, and he was very sorry to hear of its being broken open.[1]

The imprisonment, alike of Fisher and of Sir Thomas More, was not only unjust but absolutely illegal. When they expressed their willingness to swear to the succession but not to the preamble, they asked for no favour that the Act of Parliament did not warrant. The Act to which they were called on to swear prescribed no express form of words by which they should be sworn, though a form was incorporated in a later Act, which declared that it should be reputed the very oath intended.[2] The form proposed to More and Fisher, however, had been drawn up merely by Cromwell and the Lord Chancellor Audeley. Hence when More's devoted daughter, Margaret

[1] Van Ortroy, pp. 315-18.

[2] Statute 26 Hen. VIII. cap. 2.

Roper, got leave to visit him in the Tower a month or more after his committal, he said to her: "I may tell thee, Meg, they that have committed me hither for refusing of this oath, not agreeable with their statute, are not, by their own law, able to justify mine imprisonment; and surely, daughter, it is great pity that any Christian prince should, by a flexible Council ready to follow his affections, and by a weak clergy lacking grace constantly to stand to their learning, with flattery be so shamefully abused."[1] His cheerfulness, however, remained the same as ever. "I believe, Meg," he said to her, "that they that have put me here ween that they have done me a high displeasure; but I assure thee on my faith, mine own good daughter, if it had not been for my wife and ye that be my children, I would not have failed, long ere this, to have closed myself in as strait a room and straiter too.[2] But since I am come hither without mine own desert, I trust that God of His goodness will discharge me of my care, and with gracious help supply my lack among you. I find no cause, I thank God, Meg, to reckon myself in worse case here than at home, for methinketh God maketh me a wanton and setteth me on his lap and dandleth me."[3]

More's sustained cheerfulness.

His pity was not for himself, but for his chief oppressor. In the same conversation he asked his daughter how Queen Anne did. "In faith, father," she replied, "never better." "Never better, Meg?" he rejoined. "Alas, Meg, alas! it pitieth me to remember into what misery she shall shortly come."

Another characteristic incident was when the Lieutenant of the Tower one day visited him, and recalling days of old friendship, regretted that he was not allowed to entertain him better. "Mr. Lieutenant," he replied, "I verily believe, as you say, so

[1] Roper's *Life of More*, p. 93.
[2] That is to say, he had contemplated becoming a Carthusian monk.
[3] Roper's *Life of More*, p. 91.

are you my good friend indeed, and would, as you say, with your best cheer entertain me, for the which I most heartily thank you; and assure yourself, Mr. Lieutenant, I do not mislike my cheer. But whensoever I do so, then thrust me out of your doors!"[1] Nothing could damp that delightful, innocent humour.

The same spirit breaks out in more than one place in his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, written during his imprisonment in the Tower. In the following passage, as Father Bridgett has pointed out, he is evidently poking fun at his own wife, while speaking of himself and her anonymously :—

> I wist a woman once that came into a prison to visit of her charity a poor prisoner there, whom she found in a chamber (to say the truth) meetly fair, and at the leastwise it was strong enough. But with mats of straw the prisoner had made it so warm, both under the foot and round about the walls, that in these things, for the keeping of his health, she was in his behalf glad and very well comforted. But among many other displeasures that for his sake she was sorry for, one she lamented much in her mind, that he should have the chamber door shut upon him by night, and made fast by the jailor that should shut him in. "For by my troth," quoth she, "if the door should be shut upon me, I would ween it would stop up my breath." At that word of hers the prisoner laughed in his mind; but he durst not laugh aloud, nor say nothing to her, for somewhat indeed he stood in awe of her, and had his finding there much part of her charity for alms. But he could not but laugh inwardly, while he wist well enough that she used on the inside to shut every night full surely her own chamber to her, both door and windows too, and used not to open them of all the long night. And what difference, then, as to the stopping of the breath, whether they were shut up within or without?"[2]

This is probably More's own account of part of an interview more fully related by Roper, in which his wife began by telling him: "I marvel that you that

[1] Roper's *Life of More*, pp. 91, 92.
[2] *Dialogue of Comfort*, bk. iii. ch. 20. Quoted by Bridgett, *Life of More*, 366.

hitherto have been taken for so wise a man will now so play the fool to lie here in this close filthy prison, and be content thus to be shut up among mice and rats, when you might be abroad at your liberty, and with the favor and goodwill both of the King and his Council, if you would but do as all the bishops and best learned men of this realm have done."[1]

The feeling that More was too scrupulous about the oath was shared by others besides his wife, even by his favourite daughter, Margaret Roper, who had herself taken it with a qualification which was winked at—"as far as it would stand with the law of God." In August her half-sister, Lady Alington, More's step-daughter, had an opportunity of speaking to the Lord Chancellor in behalf of the illustrious prisoner, and wrote to Margaret the result. The Lord Chancellor came to her husband's house for a little hunting, and after killing his deer went to rest that night with a neighbour, where at his own request she visited him next day and hoped he would continue to be good lord to her step-father. He said he would be glad to do the best for him as for his own father, as he had shown when the matter of the Nun was laid to his charge. But he wondered More was so obstinate in a matter in which everybody did what was required except "the blind bishop" and him. He was really glad he was not a learned man like More, except in a few of Æsop's fables; and he proceeded to relate a fable about a certain rain in one country which would make all whom it wetted fools. To avoid this some concealed themselves in caves till the rain was over, hoping afterwards to rule the fools. But the fools meant to have the rule themselves, and when the wise men found out this, they wished they had been in the rain too. This he said laughing; but Lady Alington said she still hoped he would be "good lord" to her father when he saw an oppor-

[1] Roper's *Life of More*, p. 98.

tunity. The Lord Chancellor, in reply, only said he would not have More so scrupulous about his conscience, and gave her another merry fable in illustration. The wolf, being enjoined by his confessor not to eat more than the value of sixpence at a meal, ate a cow and a calf, saying in his conscience they seemed to him not worth more.[1] Such was Lord Chancellor Audeley's view of moral questions!

His daughter Margaret's conversations with him in prison.

Margaret Roper showed Lady Alington's letter to her father in the Tower, and, talking first of his bodily ailments—for he was a sufferer from gravel and stone and diseases in his breast—came gradually to insinuate that he might take some way (as many wise and learned men were of opinion) to satisfy the King without displeasing God; whereas if he did not change his mind he was likely to lose every friend who could be of use to him. "What, Mistress Eve," said More with a smile, "hath my daughter Alington played the serpent with you, and with a letter set you a-work to come tempt your father again, and for the favor that you bear him, labor to make him swear against his conscience and send him to the Devil?" He then became more serious, and told her how many years he had studied the matter and found no remedy. But after much conversation, seeing his daughter look very sad, he said to her, "How now, Margaret; what, how, Mother Eve, where is your mind now? Sit not musing with some serpent in your breast, upon some new persuasion to offer Father Adam the apple once again." She replied that she was at her wits' end and could say no more to persuade him, unless it were to offer him the reason given by Henry Patenson, formerly her father's fool, who, asking about him one day, and being told he was still in the Tower, felt really angry, and said: 'Why, what aileth him that he will not swear? Wherefore should he stick to swear? I have sworn

[1] More's *English Works*, p. 1433.

the oath myself." This she could say too. But her father laughed and said that was again like Eve, who offered Adam no worse fruit than she had eaten herself. She said she was afraid his resolution would bring him into further trouble, for Secretary Cromwell had sent him word that the Parliament lasted yet (it had only been prorogued till November). He thanked her, but said he had not left the matter unthought on. He had some hope yet that so wise a prince would not so requite his long and faithful service. But he had counted the possible peril on many a restless night, and trusted God would give him strength to take patiently whatever came.[1]

In one of his own letters to Margaret he writes more explicitly how, following the counsel in the Gospel, he had computed the cost beforehand. "I counted, Margaret," he says, "full surely, many a restless night while my wife slept and weened I had slept too, what peril were possible for to fall to me, so far forth that I am sure there can come none above. And in devising, daughter, thereupon, I had a full heavy heart. But yet, I thank our Lord, for all that, I never thought to change, though the very uttermost should happen to me that my fear ran upon." Margaret feared that he might take a different view when it was too late. "Too late, daughter Margaret!" he replied; "I beseech our Lord if ever I make such a change it may be too late indeed; for well I wot the change cannot be good for my soul." [2]

It seems that his confinement, after a time, was made more strict, that he was forbidden access to the church and visits from wife and children, and he was driven to write letters to his daughter "with a coal," [3] which no doubt means a bit of charcoal or burnt stick. This he thought might have been due to a careless

[1] More's *English Works*, pp. 1443-46. [2] *Ibid.* p. 1442.
[3] See Margaret Roper's letter to him. *Ibid.* p. 1446.

expression which he let drop in speaking with her. Something, too, was said about a further law being made to punish him for his obstinate refusal of the oath. If such a law were made, he wrote to her, he could not help it; but he hoped God would not suffer so gracious a prince and so many honourable men in Parliament to make it. He had thought, however, of that peril long before he got into the Tower. "In devising whereupon," he writes, "albeit, mine own good daughter, that I found myself (I cry God mercy) very sensual, and my flesh much more shrinking from pain and from death than methought it the part of a faithful Christian man, in such a case as my conscience gave me that in the saving of my body should stand the loss of my soul, yet I thank our Lord that in that conflict the spirit had in conclusion the mastery."[1]

His avowal of natural timidity occurs again in another passage in reply to confessed misgivings of his daughter, where he hopes God will give both of them grace to rely solely on His strength, and says she could not have a fainter heart than himself, who was almost afraid of a fillip.[2]

That the Parliament, which reassembled in November, would not be so unjust as to pass a law to punish him further for his refusal of the oath was only a pious hope on More's part. Its past labours had made amazing changes. It had abolished Peter's Pence and all payments to Rome whatever, clothed the Archbishop of Canterbury with powers hitherto considered papal on the ground that the realm was not subject to foreign authority, and made new ordinances for the election and confirmation of bishops. Now it crowned its labours by passing, first of all, the Act of Supremacy already mentioned, based on the recognition by the clergy of the King as Supreme Head of the Church without taking notice of the qualifica-

New tyrannical Acts.

[1] More's *English Works*, p. 1448.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 1449.

tion with which alone that title had with so much difficulty been conceded. Then it passed a new Act touching the succession, or rather touching the oath to be taken, which had not been set forth in the first Act, enforcing it as that which was "meant and intended at that time that every other the King's subjects should be bound to accept." Then came the new Act of Treasons, by which all persons who after the 1st February following should "maliciously wish, will, or desire, by words or writing, or by craft imagine, invent, practise, or attempt any bodily harm to be done or committed to the King's most royal person, the Queen's, or their heirs apparent, or to deprive them or any of them of their dignity, title, or name of their royal estates, or slanderously and maliciously publish and pronounce, by express writing or words, that the King our Sovereign lord should be heretic, schismatic, tyrant, infidel, or usurper of the crown," or rebelliously hold castles within the realm against him, should be guilty of high treason. More and Fisher were not likely to hold castles against the King or attempt any bodily harm either to him or Anne Boleyn; but if after the 1st of February next they denied that the King was Supreme Head of the Church of England (which was now one of his titles), they stood in danger of the new law, and powerful noblemen who agreed with them in opinion would only have required a little encouragement from abroad (if the Emperor would have sent an expedition to England to avenge the wrongs of his aunt), not only to hold castles against the King but to aid an invading army. This, indeed, was intimated secretly to the Imperial ambassador with very strong assurances, even in some cases by men of whom the King had not the least suspicion.[1]

[1] The Acts are 26 Hen. VIII. capp. 1, 2, 13. For the intimations to the Imperial ambassador see *L. P.* VIII., Pref. pp. ii.-iv., and the authorities there cited.

Further, there was an Act of Attainder passed against Fisher and some others for having refused the oath not then embodied in the statute, and a like Act against Sir Thomas More for the same offence.[1]

In the beginning of the year 1535 active steps were taken to enforce the new royal supremacy over the Church conferred by Act of Parliament. Thomas Cromwell, the King's secretary, was made also the King's Vicar-General, and in April, as we have already seen, the Carthusians and others were brought to trial. The day after their sentence, which was the last day of the month, the Lieutenant of the Tower came and informed More that Mr. Secretary Cromwell wished to speak with him, and More went with him into a chamber where Cromwell sat with the King's attorney and solicitor and some others. He was asked to take a seat beside them, but declined. Mr. Secretary asked him if he had seen the new statutes which he said he had, but, being a prisoner, had taken little note of. He was told that the King and his Council desired his opinion of them. He said he had hoped that would not have been required of him, as he had always truly declared his mind to his Highness himself and even to Cromwell; but he wished now to discharge his mind of all such matters, and be the King's faithful subject without disputing kings' or popes' titles. Cromwell told him he thought this would not satisfy the King, who was a prince of great mercy, even to those who had been obstinate, when they submitted themselves; and if More would

More visited by Cromwell in the Tower;

[1] Capp. 22, 23. In the Act against Sir Thomas More his offences are said to date from the first day of May preceding. "And forasmuch as the said Sir Thomas More, contrary to the trust and confidence aforesaid, being lawfully and duly required, since the first day of May last past, unnaturally and contrary to his duty of allegiance, intending to sow and make sedition, murmur, and grudge within this the King's realm amongst the true, obedient, and faithful subjects of the same, hath obstinately, frowardly, and contemptuously refused to make and receive such corporal oath as was ordained," etc. Why his refusal to swear is dated only from the first of May does not appear. But the whole language of the Act is so monstrously unjust that we can hardly infer anything from it.

be conformable he might be abroad in the world again. More replied that he had now quite determined within himself to meddle no more with worldly matters, but his whole study should be on the Passion of Christ and his own passage from the world.

He was dismissed for a while and afterwards called in again. Cromwell told him that, though a prisoner, he was not discharged of his allegiance, and asked him if the King might not exact of him the things contained in the statute on the same penalties as he might of other men. That he would not deny, and Cromwell again pressed him to be conformable, as his demeanour, probably, made others obstinate. He replied that he gave no man occasion to hold any one point or other, and gave no man advice or counsel therein. He could go no further whatever came; but he was the King's true subject and wished no harm to anybody. "And if this be not enough to keep a man alive," he added, "in good faith I long not to live. And I am dying already, and have, since I came here, been divers times in the case that I thought to die within one hour. And I thank our Lord I was never sorry for it, but rather sorry when I saw the pang past. And therefore my poor body is at the King's pleasure. Would God my death might do him good!" Cromwell said to him in the end very gently that no advantage should be taken of anything he had said.[1]

All this More wrote to his favourite daughter, who thereupon got leave to visit him again; and it was during that interview, which was on the 4th May, that Sir Thomas saw from his window Dr. Reynolds and the monks of the Charterhouse led out of the Tower to execution, when he made the remarks already quoted on their remarkably cheerful demeanour. The King and Council, however, evidently

[1] More's *Works*, pp. 1451-52.

hoped that the fate of those victims would make some impression both on him and on Bishop Fisher; and on the 7th Cromwell and some other councillors visited them both in prison to ascertain their final resolution. Fisher had before this been visited there at various times by his brother bishops, on one occasion by Stokesley, Gardiner, and Tunstall, who had taken the oath and wished to persuade him to do the like and save himself, though the effect seems to have been rather, at least with Gardiner and Stokesley, to wound their own consciences with remorse long afterwards that they had not shown the same heroism as the Bishop of Rochester.[1] On another occasion six or seven bishops had come to him by the King's commandment with like persuasions, and his reply, according to the old biographer, was to the following effect: "My lords, it is no small grief to me that occasion is given to deal in such matters as these be. But it grieveth me much more to see and hear such men as you be, persuade with me therein, seeing it concerneth you in your several charges as deeply as it doth me in mine. And therefore, methinketh, it had rather been all our parts to stick together in repressing these violent and unlawful intrusions and injuries daily offered to our common mother, the holy Church of Christ, than by any manner of persuasions to help or set forward the same. And we ought rather to seek by all means the temporal destruction of these ravening wolves that daily go about worrying and devouring everlastingly the flock that Christ hath committed to our charge, and the flock that Himself died for, than to suffer them thus to rage abroad."[2] Fisher also.

Does it not throw some light on the persecution of heretics when a bishop, who was actually in prison for maintaining a principle hitherto so universally accepted as the supreme authority of the See of Rome,

[1] *Life of Fisher*, ed. by Van Ortroy, p. 303. [2] *Ibid.* p. 306.

spoke of it as really a duty in bishops rather to seek the temporal destruction of those who were tormenting the flock of Christ than to acquiesce in injuries done to Mother Church? That there was an overthrow of all morality in the destruction of an old system was but too apparent; and till it was clear that the old system really was destroyed, it was certainly the right thing to uphold it, even to fight for it to the death. There might undoubtedly have been abuses —no one can deny there were such; there might have been even questionable doctrines too strongly insisted on, of which time and deliberation would have modified the expression so as to make them tenable by advancing intelligence in an undivided Church. But now it seemed that the laws of right and wrong, in faith or in practice, were to be perverted to suit the will of an arbitrary prince, and the Church must not even rebuke sin or heresy when the temporal power upheld these things as right and true. The force called public opinion was not yet enthroned to regulate public morality, and the only power which as yet, to some extent, did so, was now cruelly trampled under foot.

About Candlemas Day, Fisher received a visit in the Tower from his brother Robert, who told him of the effect of recent legislation. The Bishop raised his hands and exclaimed, "Is it so?" The new Treasons Act which came into force on the 1st February was a thing of unprecedented character; "for now," as his brother informed him, "speaking is made high treason, which was never heard of before." In fact, it had been almost too much for the servility even of Parliament to pass it, and the Commons only agreed to do so on being allowed to insert the word "maliciously," that a man might not suffer for accidental or careless expressions when his intentions were not disloyal. But his brother Robert did not think much of the value of the insertion, for the law officers of the Crown

would interpret the statute at their pleasure.[1] Fisher, however, could not help hoping for the best until after More's examination by the councillors who visited him on the 30th April. The Bishop then found means to send a letter to More to ask what answer he had made on the supremacy. More was cautious, and gave him precisely the answer he had actually made to the Council—that he had determined to meddle no more with such matters, but to fix his mind on the Passion of Christ. Fisher again wrote to him about the word "maliciously," which he considered ought to save a man from the penalties in the statute when he spoke nothing of malice; and More wrote in answer that he agreed with him, but feared, as the Bishop's brother had done, that it would not be so interpreted. After his further examination on the 7th May, More wrote to the Bishop that he could now only prepare for the worst, for Mr. Solicitor had informed him that it was all one not to answer and to say against the statute what a man would. So malice would be imputed if he made a disagreeable answer, and even silence would be counted treason if he made no answer at all! There was no mercy to be hoped for, and he only desired the Bishop to pray for him, as he would for the Bishop.[2]

It will be seen by this that the King had a Solicitor-General, by name Richard Riche, who was quite prepared to serve him by going beyond the statute itself. But even this was not the worst, as we shall find by and by, of which that servile law-officer was capable.

Over a month elapsed, during which the King's

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 856.

[2] *State Papers*, i. 433-34. Even two days after the execution of the Carthusians, *i.e.* on the 6th May, the Bishop said to the Lieutenant's servant, George Gold, "that he saw no great peril in the statute, unless it were done or spoken maliciously, and he marvelled much that the monks were put to execution, saying that they did nothing maliciously nor obstinately" (*L. P.*, VIII. 856 (30)). It was next day that More's letter taught him not to rely on the word "maliciously" as if it was any security.

Council seem to have been considering how best to get Fisher first of all within the toils of the law. On the 11th June Dr. Thomas Legh, who became next year one of the King's principal agents for the visitation of monasteries and the raking up of monastic scandals, with three subordinates, visited the Tower, and called the Lieutenant, Sir Edmund Walsingham, to hear along with them the examination of Fisher's servant, Richard Wilson, as to all that he had heard his master say in reference to the oath of succession, and what his brother Robert had told him of the Act of Treasons, what took place when Cromwell examined him on the 7th May, and what he said about it in private at supper.[1] Next day the two clerks of the Council, Thomas Bedyll and Richard Layton (the latter of whom was Dr. Legh's associate next year in the monastic visitation), with some of the same underlings, called the Bishop himself before them and the Lieutenant, and examined him upon the same subjects, and also upon his communications with his fellow-prisoner, Sir Thomas More.[2] Again, further interrogations were administered to him on the 14th before a somewhat increased number of officials,[3] but this time the questions were only three in number. First: Would he obey the King as Supreme Head of the Church of England? On this point he said he stood by the answer he had given at his last examination, but he promised to write more at length with his own hand. Second: Would he acknowledge the King's marriage with Queen Anne to be lawful, and that with the Lady Katharine invalid? He said he would obey the Act of Succession, but desired to be pardoned answering that interrogatory absolutely. Third: For what cause would he not answer "resolutely" to these interrogatories? He desired not to be driven to answer lest he should fall in danger of the statutes.

Bishop Fisher examined in the Tower;

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 856. [2] *L. P.*, VIII. 858. [3] *L. P.*, VIII. 867.

Three similar interrogatories were also administered to Sir Thomas More (after some questioning about his communications with Fisher), of which the first two were absolutely identical with those propounded to his fellow-prisoner, and the last virtually the same. His answers were: (1) that to the first he could make no answer; (2) that he never spoke against the King's marriage with Anne, and he could say no more; (3) "where it was objected to him that by the said statute he, as one of the King's subjects, is bound to answer the said question, and recognise the King as Supreme Head, like all other subjects," he said again that he could make no answer.[1] and More also.

Now before this time, on the 20th May, the Pope created seven cardinals at Rome, and one of them was Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. It was well known at Rome that he was kept in prison by Henry VIII., but the reason of his imprisonment only confirmed the general opinion of his unflinching integrity and holiness, which marked him out as a worthier prince of the Church than cardinals in general had been found for many a long day past. There was also, no doubt, a feeling, plausible, perhaps, but by no means so well justified, that if anything on earth could daunt the unscrupulous King of England, and make him turn back from his evil ways, it would be this public and official recognition of the sentiment of veneration felt all over Europe for a bishop who in the midst of such an oppressive tyranny had never been afraid to do his duty. The Pope thus set an official seal on sentiments that could not be ignored, and that the King already knew that he must reckon with. Unhappily, politicians knew too well that he was more likely to be hardened than to be intimidated. The papal curia was not yet aware of the hideous butchery of the Carthusians which had taken place on the 4th, and, when the news arrived at Rome, good Fisher made a cardinal at Rome.

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 867, iv.

judges had little hope that More and Fisher would be spared. Writing to the Empress from Rome on the 31st, Dr. Ortiz expressed the opinion that before Fisher was aware of his new dignity, God Himself would have given him the true red hat, the crown of martyrdom.[1]

The King's anger.

Henry, indeed, was intensely exasperated, and, in a more fiendish disposition than ever, declared repeatedly that he himself would give Fisher another hat, and send his head to Rome to be fitted with that of a cardinal. It is quite clear that the news was, in fact, the immediate cause of his sending councillors to the Tower to summon the Bishop and More to acknowledge his supremacy, for as yet neither of them had been brought properly within the meshes of the law.[2] A papal messenger, if we may trust an anonymous letter of the period, actually carried the hat across the Channel into England,[3] with a bull to excommunicate the King if he refused to release the Bishop or let him wear it.[4] Vain threat! Henry cared nothing for papal censures, the promulgation of which in England was impossible, and what became of the hat we do not know. No external influence whatever could control the King. Francis I., the best political friend he had upon the Continent, was implored[5] to intercede with him for Fisher, and would willingly have done so, but feared he could do little good. Henry, he said, treated even him at times like a subject, and it was almost impossible to put up with him. But he was obliged to do so, as he could not afford to lose his friendship.[6] Such a humiliating confession could hardly have been made by one of the two chief sovereigns on the Continent if it had not been true; and we may judge from this how little

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 786. [2] *L. P.*, VIII. 876.
[3] According to the early biographer, however, it was stayed at Calais, the King forbidding the Lord-Deputy to let it pass further (Ortroy, 311).
[4] *L. P.*, VIII. 791. [5] *Ib.* Nos. 812, 813. [6] *Ib.* No. 837.

any foreign influence could be relied on to control Henry's despotism at home.

It is recorded by the early biographer of Fisher that, on hearing of his creation as cardinal, the King despatched

> Mr. Thomas Cromwell, his secretary, to this good father in his prison to advertise him what was done, only to the intent to know what he would say to it and how he would take it. Mr. Cromwell being come into his chamber and entering into talk with him of many matters asked at last in this manner: "My Lord of Rochester," said he, "if the Pope should now send you a cardinal's hat, what would you do? Would you take it?" "Sir," said he, "I know myself far unworthy of any such dignity, that I think of nothing less than such matters. But if he do send it me, assure yourself I will work with it by all the means I can to benefit the Church of Christ; and in that respect I will receive it upon my knees." Mr. Cromwell making report afterward of this answer to the King, the King said again with great indignation and spite: "Yea, is he yet so lusty? Well, let the Pope send him a hat when he will; but I will so provide that whenever it cometh he shall wear it on his shoulders, for head shall he have none to set it on."[1]

The early biographer was certainly not without authority for this incident, for Cromwell's visit to the prisoner is mentioned in a letter of the papal nuncio in France written just after the news of his execution reached the French Court at La Fère.[2] Yet the fact does not appear among the numerous details brought out by examinations just before Fisher's trial, and it is more likely that Cromwell used other agents to question the Bishop in the way required. It appears that the prisoner actually received the news from George Gold, the Lieutenant of the Tower's servant, on Saturday the 29th May, and that he answered that "he set as much by that as by a rush under his foot." Perhaps he did not at first altogether credit the news, for George Gold was not always sober, and

[1] Van Ortroy, pp. 311, 312.

[2] *L. P.*, VIII. 985.

the authority might have been doubtful, but apparently George was serious, and Fisher presently accepted it as a fact. "A cardinal!" he exclaimed; "then I perceive it was not for nought that my Lord Chancellor did ask me when I heard from my master the Pope, and said that there was never man that had exalted the Pope as I had."[1] Efforts were probably made to prevent the circulation of the news, for it was only on the following Saturday, the 5th June, that it reached George White (probably Edward White, the Bishop's brother-in-law, is meant), who had it from William Thornton of Thames Street, the purveyor of Fisher's diets, who had it from Mr. Thornham, steward to Anne Boleyn's father, the Earl of Wiltshire, and also from George Gold and John the Falconer.[2] These facts were elicited by the inquiry.

Trial of Fisher and three more Carthusians.

Already on the 1st June a special Commission of *oyer and terminer* had been issued for the county of Middlesex, with a view to the trial of Fisher and of three more of the Charterhouse monks whom the fate of their prior and his fellow-martyrs, four weeks earlier, had not induced to accept the King's supremacy. These seem to have been brought before Cromwell on the 25th May at his house at Stepney, when each of them distinctly declared that he could not take the King as Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England under Christ. Having made this answer, of course, there was no difficulty in drawing up their indictment. They were tried on the 11th June, found guilty, and condemned. On the 17th, Fisher was brought to the Bar in Westminster Hall. His indictment was read, in which he was described as John Fisher, late of Rochester, clerk, otherwise late Bishop of Rochester. The only thing that was found against him was that he had in the Tower of London on the 7th May preceding, against his allegiance, falsely, maliciously, and treasonably declared, "The

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 856 (21, 26). [2] *L. P.*, VIII. 856.

King our Sovereign Lord is not Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England." He pleaded Not guilty. The story of his trial seems to have been confused by early writers with that of More, and there are no official details. The result, it need scarcely be said, was a verdict and judgment for treason, and execution was ordered to be done at Tyburn.[1] Before sentence was passed upon him, being admitted to speak like others in similar cases, he said he had not contravened the statutes maliciously but with truth and holy intention, as they were opposed both to the Scriptures and to the Faith. On his return to the Tower he was followed by a great crowd of men and women, bemoaning his fate and asking his blessing before he passed the moat.[2]

The order for his execution was changed. He was not to be hanged at Tyburn, with the horrible brutalities of an ordinary execution for treason. He was to be decapitated on Tower Hill. But the change was not due to mercy on the King's part. Some politic mercy, indeed, it would seem, that the King had already shown him; for in the Lent preceding he had been bedridden with severe illness, and, as his life seemed in serious danger, the King had sent him "divers physicians to give him preservatives."[3]

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 886. [2] *L. P.*, VIII. 1075.

[3] Van Ortroy, 344. Apparently one of these physicians was Dr. Fryar, whose name, mutilated in a decayed document, is the most probable reading of "Dr. Fre . . ." in *Letters and Papers*, VIII. No. 856 (45). But Father Bridgett is mistaken in supposing (*Life of Fisher*, Appendix, p. 41) that Fryar's letter to Cromwell of the 16th August about his attendance on the Bishop of Rochester refers to Bishop Fisher. It was really written four years later, in 1539, after the death of Bishop Hilsey. The letter itself shows that the Bishop, who was his patient, had himself called him to attendance on him, promising to recompense his services, though after his death all his goods were "converted to the King's coffers." Fisher could hardly have summoned the King's physician to his bedside and promised him a reward. Moreover, the writer jests in a way that he could only have done about a patient who had died under his hands. He has been left unpaid, and unless Cromwell be good to him he shall lose both his labour, his friend (*i.e.* the patient), and his physic. "And truly," he goes on to say, "if physicians should take no money for them that they kill as well as for them that they save, their livings should be very thin and bare"; with a little

Henry did not intend him to slip out of his hands by a natural death; nor did he like the idea of his victim—a man so feeble with old age and illness—being drawn on a hurdle through the streets all the way to Tyburn; for such a journey was quite enough to have killed him long before he reached the place of execution.[1] As it was, he appeared on the scaffold like a living skeleton, little more than skin and bones.[2] He addressed the people briefly, saying he was come to die for the faith of Christ's Holy and Catholic Church, and though he had not feared death hitherto he desired their prayers that he might be steadfast without fainting. He prayed for the King and realm, and that God would send the King good counsel. Then, after some private devotions, he laid his head on the block, and the executioner cut it off at one blow. The body was buried in the evening in the Churchyard of All Hallows Barking, close by Tower Hill; and the head, after being parboiled in hot water, was stuck upon a pole and set upon London Bridge beside the heads of the Carthusians who had suffered before him. A marvellous story is told of the effect it produced on spectators, that its aspect "grew fresher and fresher, so that in his lifetime he never looked so well; for his cheeks being beautified with a comely red, the face looked as though it had beholden the people passing by and would have spoke to them." The passage over the bridge was stopped by men gazing at it; and the authorities at

Execution of Fisher.

further merriment of that kind. Bishop Hilsey, whom all books of reference —even the *Dictionary of National Biography*—declare to have died in 1538, really died, as Wriothesley's *Chronicle* states, on the 4th August 1539, and Fryar's letter, dated the 16th August, was evidently written that year, just twelve days after his death. In it he says he had attended the Bishop for twelve days, and had been up four nights watching the patient.

[1] Van Ortroy, p. 336. The old biographer evidently follows here the contemporary letter of Gulielmus Covrinus as to the reason of the sentence being altered, which is only given as the opinion of some persons. But we may be pretty certain that it was the true reason.

[2] *Ib.* 343, which is confirmed by what Brion, the Admiral of France, said to the Bishop of Faenza. *L. P.*, VIII. p. 389.

last found it necessary to remove an object which occasioned so much inconvenience. It was said that the executioner had orders to throw it into the river at night.[1]

More's turn was to come next. A new special Commission for Middlesex was issued on the 26th June—four days after Fisher's martyrdom. An indictment was drawn up against him on Monday the 28th, formidable, indeed, from its length, but hardly, one would think, from its matter. It was found that he had traitorously attempted to deprive the King of his title of Supreme Head of the Church when, in reply to Cromwell and the other councillors who examined him on the subject in the Tower on the 7th May, he refused to give a direct answer, and said he would not meddle with such matters, being determined to serve God and think of His Passion and of his own passage out of the world. Then afterwards he had written letters to Fisher, which he had transmitted to him by George Gold, reporting this answer, with the remark that the Act of Parliament was like a two-edged sword: if a man answered one way it would confound his soul, if the other way it would confound his body. Later, fearing that Fisher might reveal on further examination what he had written to him, he had sent him other letters advising him to answer according to his own mind and avoid using the same expressions lest the Council should suspect confederacy between them; yet both Fisher and More actually did say very much the same thing, each using that two-edged sword simile when examined in the Tower by Audeley and others on the 3rd June. And, moreover, More and Fisher, to conceal their treacherous intentions, had severally

More's indictment.

[1] Van Ortroy, pp. 349, 350. The source, however, is the contemporary epistle of Gulielmus Covrinus printed with More's *Lucubrationes*, pp. 511 *sq.* (Basel, 1563). It will also be found at the end of More's *Latin Works* (Frankfort, 1689), and at the end of Roper's *More* (Chiswick edition, 1817), p. 179.

burned the letters that had passed between them. Then, on the 12th June, Richard Riche, the Solicitor-General, had come and charitably moved him to comply with the Acts; but More's answer was, "Your conscience will save you, and my conscience will save me." Riche, then, saying he had no authority to communicate with him, put a case:—"Suppose that it were enacted by Parliament that he, Richard Riche, should be King, and that it should be treason to deny the same, what would be the offence if he, Sir Thomas More, were to say that the said Riche was King?" More admitted that it would be no offence, but that he would be bound by the Act to take him as such. But what if Parliament were to enact that God should not be God, and that opposing that Act should be treason? Would Riche not offend in saying that God was not God according to the statute? Riche conceded that that would be wrong, because it was impossible that God should not be God. But that was a very high case, and he would put a medium one. More knew that the King was made Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England; why should he not accept him as such as in the like case he would accept Riche as King? More, "persevering in his treasons," answered that the cases were not similar, because a king can be made or deprived by Act of Parliament, to which every subject, being at the Parliament, could give his assent; but as to the primacy [in the Church] a subject could not be bound, because he could not give his consent to that in Parliament, and though the King was so accepted in England, foreign countries would not affirm it. So runs the indictment.[1]

His trial.

On the 1st July he was brought to trial at Westminster before the Commission, the two leading members of which were Lord Chancellor Audeley and the Duke of Norfolk. A contemporary account

[1] *L. P.*, VIII. 974.

of the trial circulated on the Continent[1] says that these two began by addressing him as follows: "You, Master More, have greatly erred against the King; nevertheless we hope by his clemency that if you repent and correct your obstinate opinion, in which you have so rashly persevered, you will receive pardon." He replied: "My Lords, I thank you very heartily for your goodwill. I pray God preserve me in my just opinion, even to death. As to the accusation against me, I fear words, memory, and judgment would alike fail me to reply to such a length of articles, especially considering my present imprisonment and great infirmity." Out of consideration for this a chair was given him, and he proceeded as follows:—

His reply to the charges.

"As to the first article, charging me with having always maliciously opposed the King's second marriage,[2] I will only answer that what I have said has been according to my conscience. I never wished to conceal the truth, and if I had, I should have been a traitor. For this error, if error it should be called, I have been condemned to perpetual imprisonment, which I have already suffered for fifteen months, and my goods confiscated. For this reason I will only reply to the principal charge against me, that I have incurred the penalty of the statute made in the last [session of] Parliament since I was in prison, by refusing to the King his title of Supreme Head of the Church; in proof of which you allege my reply to the secretary and council, that as I was dead to the world I did not care to think of such things, but only of the Passion of Christ. I reply that your statute cannot condemn me to death for such silence, for

[1] It was circulated in Paris before the 23rd July. See the letter of Gulielmus Covrinus, printed with More's *Lucubrationes*, p. 511 (Basel, 1563).

[2] This article, as a matter of fact, is not in the indictment; but was probably touched upon by Norfolk or the Lord Chancellor in the address delivered to him before the trial, in which they told him he had gravely erred against the King.

neither your statute nor any laws in the world punish people except for words or deeds, surely not for keeping silence."

The King's proctor replied that such silence was a proof of malice intended against the statute, especially as every faithful subject, on being questioned about the statute, was obliged to answer categorically that the statute was good and wholesome. "Surely," replied More, "if what the common law says is true, that he who is silent seems to consent, my silence should rather be taken as approval than contempt of your statute. You say that all good subjects are obliged to reply; but I say that the faithful subject is more bound by his conscience and his soul than to anything else in the world, provided his conscience, like mine, does not raise scandal or sedition, and I assure you that I have never discovered what is in my conscience to any person living."

"As to the second article," he went on, "that I have conspired against the statute by writing eight letters to the Bishop of Rochester, advising him to disobey it, I could wish those letters had been read in public; but as you say the Bishop burnt them I will tell you the substance of them. Some were about private matters connected with our old friendship. Another was a reply to one of his asking how I had answered in the Tower to the first examination about the statute. I said that I had informed my conscience, and so he also ought to do the same. I swear that this was the tenor of the letters, for which I cannot be condemned by your statute."

"Touching the third article, that, when I was examined by the Council, I answered that your statute was like a two-edged sword, for he who approved it would ruin his soul, and he who contradicted it his body; and that the Bishop of Rochester answered similarly, showing that we were con-

federates: I reply that I only answered thus conditionally; — if the statute cut both ways like a two-edged sword, how could a man behave so as not to incur either danger? I do not know how the Bishop replied, but if he answered like me it must have been from the agreement between us in opinion, not because we had ever arranged it between us. Be assured I never did or said anything maliciously against the statute, but it may be that this has been maliciously reported to the King."

So far Sir Thomas More's defence was published at Paris soon after the news of his death.[1] But there was something else, which probably it was too dangerous to publish, even in a foreign country, for Francis I. was interested in not allowing too much discredit to be heaped upon the doings of his ally, King Henry. More had still to reply to the charge brought against him by Riche, showing that Riche had inveigled him into a conversation in which, notwithstanding his previous resolution not to meddle with the question whether the King was Supreme Head of the Church or not, he virtually said that Parliament had no right to make him so. Riche swore to the conversation between them in open court; and he received a reply such as (happily) was never given to any other Solicitor-General in English history. "If I were a man, my lords," said Sir Thomas, "that did not regard an oath, I needed not, as is well known, stand in this place at this time, nor in this case, as an accused person. And if this oath of yours, Mr. Riche, be true, then I pray that I never see God in the face; which I would not say, were it otherwise, to win the whole world."

He accuses Riche of perjury.

He then gave in court a true version of their conversation, and said: "In good faith, Mr. Riche, I am sorrier for your perjury than for mine own peril; and

[1] Stapleton's account in his *Tres Thomæ* is a literal translation from this contemporary news-letter.

you shall understand that neither I nor no man else to my knowledge ever took you to be a man of such credit as, in any matter of importance, I, or any other, would at any time vouchsafe to communicate with you. And I, as you know, of no small while have been acquainted with you and your conversation, who have known you from your youth hitherto, for we long dwelled together in one parish, where, as yourself can tell (I am sorry you compel me so to say), you were esteemed very light of your tongue, a great dicer, and of no commendable fame. And so in your house at the Temple, where hath been your chief bringing up, were you likewise accounted. Can it therefore seem likely to your honourable lordships that I would in so weighty a cause so unadvisedly overshoot myself as to trust Mr. Riche, a man of me always reputed of little troth, as your lordships have heard, so far above my sovereign lord the King or any of his noble councillors that I would unto him utter the secrets of my conscience touching the King's supremacy, the special point and only mark at my hands so long sought for? A thing that I never did, nor never would, after the statute thereof made, reveal unto the King's Highness himself or to any of his honourable councillors, as it is not unknown unto your honours, at sundry several times sent from his own person to the Tower to me for none other purpose. Can this, in your judgment, my lords, seem likely to be true? And yet if I had so done indeed, my lords, as Mr. Riche hath sworn, seeing it was spoken but in secret familiar talk, nothing affirming, and only in putting of cases, without other displeasant circumstances, it cannot justly be taken to be spoken *maliciously*; and where there is no malice there can be no offence."

He added further observations showing how incredible it was that Parliament ever intended by this statute to punish by death a man who had no

malice, and that the word "maliciously" was as material to the statute as the word "forcible" in the statute of forcible entries. And he ended by saying that the high favour shown him by the King for twenty years from his first entry into his service, exalting him to be Privy Councillor, and finally Lord Chancellor—an office he had never given to a temporal man before—till at his own suit he was discharged of it, ought to be a sufficient refutation of Riche's slanderous imputation.[1]

Riche made a lame attempt to save his credit by calling two witnesses who were present at the conversation, but they pretended that their attention had been otherwise engaged packing up More's books in a sack—a subterfuge, clearly, to avoid sharing Riche's perjury. Intimidation everywhere carried the day; the jury within a quarter of an hour found More guilty, and Lord Chancellor Audeley, as president of the court, was about to proceed to judgment when More again claimed a hearing. "My lord," he said, "when I was towards the law the manner in such case was to ask the prisoner before judgment what he could say why judgment should not be given against him." It was curious, certainly, to see a judge of such exalted position put in mind of his duty by the prisoner at the Bar. But the prisoner was unquestionably right, and the Lord Chancellor, "staying his judgment wherein he had partly proceeded, demanded of him what he was able to say to the contrary?" More then replied as follows:—

"Forasmuch, my lords, as this indictment is grounded upon an Act of Parliament directly repugnant to the laws of God and His Holy Church, the supreme government whereof, or any part thereof, may no temporal prince presume by any law to take upon him, as rightfully belonging to the See of Rome, a spiritual pre-eminency by the mouth of our Saviour

[1] Roper's *Life of More*, pp. 102-106.

himself, personally present upon the earth, only to St. Peter and his successors, bishops of the same See, by special prerogative granted, it is therefore in law amongst Christian men insufficient to charge any Christian man. And for proof thereof, like as amongst divers other reasons and authorities, he declared that, like as this realm, being but a member and small part of the Church, might not make a particular law disagreeable to the general law of Christ's universal Catholic Church, no more than the city of London, being but one poor member in respect of the whole realm, might make a law against an Act of Parliament to bind the whole realm; so further showed he that it was both contrary to the laws and statutes of this our land yet unrepealed, as they might evidently perceive in Magna Charta, *quod Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit, et habeat omnia sua jura integra et illesa*, and also contrary to that sacred oath which the King's Highness himself, and every other Christian prince always with great solemnity received at their coronations. Alleging, moreover, that no more might this realm of England refuse obedience to the See of Rome than might the child refuse obedience to his own natural father. For, as St. Paul said to the Corinthians, 'I have regenerated you, my children in Christ,' so might St. Gregory, Pope of Rome (since by St. Augustine, his messenger, we first received the Christian faith), of us Englishmen truly say, 'You are my children, because I have, under Christ, given to you everlasting salvation (a far higher and better inheritance than any carnal father can leave to his children), and by 'regeneration have made you spiritual children in Christ.'"

He holds an Act of Parliament invalid if against the law of the Church.

The Lord Chancellor replied that as all the bishops, universities, and learned men of the kingdom had agreed to the Act it was strange that More alone "would so stiffly stand thereat and so vehemently argue thereagainst." More answered again that if the

number of bishops and universities were so material he claimed the majority on his side, for in Christendom not one fourth part were of the Lord Chancellor's opinion; and as to those deceased, many of whom were now saints in heaven, he was sure by far the greater part agreed with himself. "And therefore," he said, "I am not bound, my lord, to conform my conscience to the counsel of one realm against the general counsel of Christendom."[1]

The verdict of the jury had unloosed his tongue. Hitherto, not to give needless offence, he had absolutely refused to state why his conscience would not suffer him to take the oath. Now, he must make it known, and he took care to do so simply as a lawyer. There were laws higher and more binding than even the statutes of the realm—not merely the laws of God and of morality, but laws which were confessed to be such through all Christendom, of which England was only a part—laws of universal obligation, upheld by the authority of St. Peter and his successors, which no temporal prince had any right to arrogate to himself. Deference to that universal authority was required even in England by Magna Charta and the Coronation Oath, and it was no more competent for the realm of England to refuse obedience to the See of Rome than for a child to refuse to obey its father. This was an appeal, not merely to abstract principles of justice, but even to the principles of the English Constitution itself as interpreted by one who was certainly the most upright and the clearest-headed lawyer of his day. If things are different now, as they certainly are and have been for centuries, why should we refuse a whole-hearted sympathy to this noble sufferer for righteousness' sake? He appealed to principles then of universal acceptance, and his very hearers and judges knew in their own hearts that his appeal was just.

[1] Roper, pp. 106-111.

The Lord Chancellor, in fact, was perplexed, More had taken so "many exceptions" and had alleged so many reasons—more, in fact, than have been recorded. "Loth to have the burden of the judgment wholly to depend upon himself," he appealed for advice to Chief Justice Fitz-James, sitting on the Commission along with him, whether he considered the indictment a sufficient one. The Chief Justice, "like a wise man," says Roper—meaning, doubtless, like a well-trained lawyer who understood the situation — "answered, 'My Lords all, by St. Julian' (that was ever his oath) 'I must needs confess that if the Act of Parliament be not unlawful, then is the indictment in my conscience good.' Whereunto the Lord Chancellor said to the rest of the Lords, 'Lo, my Lords, lo, you hear what my Lord Chief Justice sayeth,' and so immediately gave judgment against him." But even after judgment was pronounced the Commissioners offered him a hearing if he had anything further to say in his defence. His answer was: "More have I not to say, my Lords, but that like as the blessed Apostle St. Paul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, was present and consented to the death of St. Stephen, and kept their clothes that stoned him to death, and yet be they now both twain holy Saints in Heaven, and shall continue there friends together for ever; so, I verily trust, and shall therefore right heartily pray that though your Lordships have now here in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in heaven all meet together to everlasting salvation."[1]

Incidents after the trial.

Sir William Kingston, Constable of the Tower, conducted him back from Westminster as far as the Old Swan by London Bridge, where he took leave of him, the tears running down his cheeks. Sir Thomas comforted him, and said: "Good Mr. Kingston, trouble not yourself, but be of good cheer; for I will pray

[1] Roper, pp. 111, 112.

for you and my good lady your wife that we may meet in heaven together, where we shall be merry for ever and ever." Sir William afterwards confessed to Roper that he was ashamed of himself finding his own heart so feeble and More's so strong, when he should rather have comforted More than More him.[1]

A more pathetic incident occurred immediately afterwards. His daughter, Margaret Roper, was waiting about Tower Wharf to get a last look of her father. As he passed she received his blessing upon her knees; but, not satisfied with that, she pressed through the throng, careless of the guard with their halberds and bills, ran up to him and embraced and kissed him. With equal warmth he returned her affection and gave her his fatherly blessing and many words of comfort. Then, after parting, or being parted, from him, having gone about ten or twelve steps, "she, not satisfied with the former sight of him, and like one that had forgotten herself, being all ravished with the entire love of her father, having respect neither to herself, nor to the press of people and multitude that were there about him, suddenly turned back again, ran to him as before, took him about the neck and divers times kissed him lovingly, and at last, with a full and heavy heart, was fain to depart from him; the beholding whereof was to many that were present so lamentable, that it made them for very sorrow thereof to weep and mourn."[2]

His sentence, like Fisher's, was altered to decapitation, and he was destined to suffer on the fifth morning after his judgment. In the interval he was visited by a foolish courtier, who urged him even yet to change his mind. Wearied with his importunity, More at last told him that he had changed it, and the man went to inform the King. Henry sent him back to the prisoner to ascertain more explicitly in

[1] Roper, pp. 112-13. [2] *Ib.* pp. 113-15. Comp. *L. P.*, VIII. 996.

what matter his mind was changed, and More rebuked him for reporting a mere trivial expression uttered in jest. "For my meaning was," he said, "that whereas I had purposed to have been shaven, that I might seem to others as I before was wont, my mind is changed, for that I intend my beard shall take such part as my head doth." The courtier was dismayed at having to carry back an explanation which made the King very angry.[1]

His farewell to his daughter.

The day before he suffered he sent his hair shirt to Margaret Roper, accompanied by a letter written with charcoal containing these words, in addition to some special messages to others of his family :—

"I cumber you, good Margaret, much, but I would be sorry if it should be any longer than to-morrow; for it is St. Thomas' Even and the Utas of St. Peter.[2] And therefore to-morrow long I to go to God; it were a day very meet and convenient for me. Dear Meg, I never liked your manner towards me better than when you kissed me last. For I like when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy."[3]

Early next morning, Tuesday 6th July, he was visited by Thomas Pope—Sir Thomas Pope, as Roper calls him, though he was not knighted for some years after,—sent by the King and Council to inform him that he must die that day at nine o'clock before noon. "Mr. Pope," he replied, "for your good tidings I heartily thank you. I have been always much bounden to the King's Highness for the benefits and honors that he hath still from time to time most bountifully heaped upon me; and yet more bounden am I to his Grace for putting me into this place where I have had convenient time and space to have

[1] Cresacre More's *Life*, 279, 280.

[2] The 6th July was the Eve of the Translation of St. Thomas the Martyr (Becket) and the Utas or Octave of the feast of SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles.

[3] Roper, pp. 115, 116. Comp. More's *English Works*, p. 1457.

remembrance of my end. And, so God help me, most of all, Mr. Pope, am I bounden to his Highness that it hath pleased him so shortly to rid me from the miseries of this wretched world; and therefore will I not fail earnestly to pray for his Grace both here and also in the world to come." "The King's pleasure is further," said Pope, "that at your execution you shall not use many words." "Mr. Pope," he replied, "you do well to give me warning of his Grace's pleasure, for otherwise at that time had I purposed somewhat to have spoken, but of no matter wherewith his Grace or any should have had cause to be offended. Nevertheless, whatsoever I intended, I am ready obediently to conform myself to his Grace's commandment; and I beseech you, good Mr. Pope, to be a mean to his Highness that my daughter Margaret may be at my burial." "The King is content already," Pope answered, "that your wife and children and other your friends shall have liberty to be present thereat." "Oh, how much beholden, then," returned Sir Thomas, "am I unto his Grace, that unto my poor burial vouchsafeth to have so gracious consideration!" On taking leave, Pope could not refrain from tears; but Sir Thomas said, "Quiet yourself, good Mr. Pope, and be not discomforted; for I trust that we shall, once in heaven, see each other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love together in joyful bliss eternally."[1]

We could easily continue quoting from the simple narrative of his son-in-law, and no other words could be more effective; but the pathos of this noble martyr's fate almost blinds us, even while we read, to the details of his heroism. Modern readers can hardly realise, even as a virtue, the patient submission to tyranny which induced him thus, at the last, to forbear delivering that speech to the people at his execution, which it had been his intention to utter.

[1] Roper, pp. 116-17.

Insubordination in such a matter could scarcely have injured him then, but it might have created among the people more sympathy than the King would have found agreeable. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake"[1] was a principle of deeper sanctity at that time than perhaps any one would proclaim it now; and, even if felt as it was in past days, happily there could now be no such occasion for displaying it. To More the duty of submission was plain; even if allowed to speak he would have said nothing offensive to Henry VIII. For the King had a right to command him in all things where a higher law did not claim his allegiance; and if the King were ever so unjust, he was still an anointed king, who ought not to be withstood except for conscience' sake, unless his iniquities were such that the Pope should declare him deposed.

His last moments.

Conscious that the trials of life were now over, More prepared to meet his fate in the same serene tranquillity. He put on his best apparel for the scaffold, which the lieutenant advised him to put off again, as the executioner, to whom it would go, "was but a javell" (a base fellow). "What, Mr. Lieutenant," he said, "shall I account him a javell that shall do me this day so singular a benefit? Nay, I assure you, were it cloth-of-gold I should think it well bestowed on him, as St. Cyprian did, who gave his executioner thirty pieces of gold." He was persuaded, however, to put off the fine garment—a gown of silk camlet given him by his friend Bonvisi in prison—and put on a gown of friese, and he gave the executioner a gold angel. Ascending the scaffold, which was shaky, he said to the Lieutenant, "I pray you, see me up safe, and for my coming down let me shift for myself." He then desired the people to pray for him, and to bear witness that he died for the faith of the Catholic Church. He would not let

[1] 1 Peter ii. 13.

the executioner cover his eyes, but did so himself with a cloth he had brought for the purpose. He kneeled down and, after saying his prayers, turned to the executioner and said with cheerful countenance: "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thine office. My neck is very short. Take heed, therefore, thou strike not awry for saving of thine honesty." But before the fatal blow he desired the executioner to stay till he put his beard aside; for that, he said, had never committed treason. Then he submitted to the axe.[1]

The execution of Sir Thomas More was the final tragedy in that year's bitter persecution. Saintly as his character was, it was not more saintly than that of Fisher, nor than those of Reynolds and the Carthusian martyrs who preceded him. But they were men professionally devoted to the cause of religion, while he was a layman who had filled the highest office in the kingdom. He had been clothed with honour and dignity, and gone about with all the external parade of a Lord Chancellor. He had been beloved and honoured even by his cruel Sovereign, who in past days would visit him unexpectedly at his home at Chelsea, and walk round the garden with him with his arm about his neck.[2] His praise was in all men's mouths for urbanity, kindness, and generosity, and there were many in foreign lands who had never seen him who could not refrain from tears at the news of his fate.[3] Royal supremacy over the Church had been fully vindicated now, and—if that were possible — the marriage of Henry and Anne Boleyn. But there can hardly be a doubt that Henry himself was appalled at the cost of his own

[1] Roper, pp. 118-19; Stapleton's *Tres Thomæ*, pp. 352-4; Cresacre More, 283-6.

[2] Roper, p. 25.

[3] See the epistle of "Covrinus Nucerinus" (thought by some to be Erasmus in disguise) at end of More's *Latin Works*, p. 350. Also printed at end of Roper's *More*, p. 182. The same thing is stated by Cardinal Pole (see extract translated by Cresacre More, p. 278).

policy. It is said that he was playing cards when the news of More's execution was brought to him, and that, glancing at Anne, he said, "Thou art the cause of this man's death."[1] At all events, it was a statement of fact.

[1] Cresacre More, p. 287.

CHAPTER V

SIR THOMAS MORE'S WRITINGS

We cannot read the story of such martyrdoms—of death looked persistently in the face, and torture endured with so much patience and equanimity—without asking ourselves one question, which is surely of very serious moment. Were not these great Christian heroes altogether in the right? To give them half-hearted sympathy is ignoble. To suppose that they did not judge truly the merits of the cause for which they died is to suppose something very strange in the history of martyrdom. Yet to admit that they were right altogether seems at first sight to destroy the position of English Protestantism entirely and we are led to the conclusion that generation after generation among ourselves has been brought up in a mutilated, unhealthy Christianity during the last three hundred years.

Full sympathy due to martyrs.

The practical answer to this with most people will probably come from personal experience. "I do not feel," a man may say, "that the religion in which I have been brought up is unwholesome. There may be matters to be amended in practice as well as in form and manner. But when I look abroad I see no evidence that countries more under the sway of Rome than our own, are either more truly religious or more highly civilised. Where Roman religion is generally prevalent it harbours, so far as I can see, quite as much real unbelief beneath the surface as the Anglican

communion does. I doubt if it does not harbour even more. Above the surface it surely permits a great deal more superstition. As to the mere matter of belief, Roman Catholics throw the responsibility of their *credenda* more than we do upon the Church and the priesthood; and so, I rather think, their faith becomes less lively. Ours may be impaired by more plainly uttered doubts and questionings; but among them, for the most part, a mere lifeless assent, or acceptance without protest of all that their Church teaches, simply kills individual inquiry, and turns the conventional assent itself into something very like unbelief."

But, even if the Protestant be justified in thinking thus, he requires some historical justification for his religion; and at the outset of the separation from Rome, it must be frankly owned, every generous feeling goes strongly with the heroes and martyrs of the old faith. Never was a new principle introduced in more revolting form than that royal supremacy which has governed the Church of England ever since Henry VIII.'s days. Royal supremacy is, in truth, a rather ambiguous doctrine, which has been disliked by pious minds down to the present day; and even if we acknowledge that it contained within it a hidden seed of good to be matured in after ages, we cannot pretend that its enforcement at the outset was anything but a wilful destruction of the best existing guarantees for public morality. The revolution which Sir Thomas More saw impending, and fain would have averted, has long since passed through evil and good results to results in which we may fairly trust that good predominates over evil. But it is impossible to argue on this account that it was good in its inception. Nor even, if we dismiss from consideration the base personal motives of the tyrant by whom it was effected, can we comfort ourselves truly by the belief that it was aided by the enlightened zeal of others for a purer

But they could not avert a revolution.

form of religion. For, whatever may be said of the ardent heretics who contributed to that revolution, it is a great mistake to look upon them as the emancipators of human thought. Those who so regard them, as it seems to me, altogether mistake their character; and from this cause, besides other errors, they do injustice to the very noblest men of the day. They seem actually to look upon Sir Thomas More in particular, as two diametrically opposite persons strangely combined—the one a humane and liberal-minded man, honourable, learned, enlightened, and the very soul of equity; the other bigoted and cruel, a hater and a persecutor of all who differed in opinion from the Church. How two such absolutely contrary characters could be united in one man is something more than a paradox; it is a moral impossibility. But, much as we have said of More already, there still remains much to say, and this mystery demands our attention in the first place.

Different views of Sir Thomas More.

The elucidation clearly must depend upon our insight into the social and religious condition of the time. We are far too apt to look upon the Reformation as a mere theological change, whereas in truth the theological change followed rather in the wake of political and social changes. Disbelief in transubstantiation and purgatory, in the intercession of Saints, and in many other doctrines, of course, existed in a multitude of minds long before the sixteenth century; but the mere opinion of a sect was not authoritative, and the judgment of qualified divines alone commanded respect. Even the discussion of such matters by mere laymen was accounted rash and presumptuous, though there was nothing to prevent reverent inquiry on the part of a layman who consulted a competent spiritual adviser. The essence of heresy was not erroneous thinking—for all men are liable to that—but arrogance, tending to contempt of the decisions of learned councils and the most approved judgments

of ancient fathers. The Church offered no obstacle to thoughtful inquiry by which her tenets might be carefully tested, explained, or developed; but she did not love rough treatment of things sacred, by men ill-qualified to handle them.

It is this state of matters which we find it now so difficult to realise. The right of private judgment is recognised and claimed by every one, and it includes, of course, the right of pronouncing very rash judgments on very insufficient grounds. Every one may think as he pleases, and the uneducated layman, who may give one hour a week to thoughts about theology against forty which he devotes to the state of the markets, has but little misgivings on the question of faith and works, or even perhaps as to the mystery of the Real Presence. Whatever theology may say upon these subjects, he believes his own view to be pure common sense. Nor is it wonderful that his thoughts should be crude and ill-digested when even men of science and members of the more liberal professions criticise doctrines still more freely, hardly admitting even the claims of a Revelation from which the whole body of divine truth has been evolved. Yet the soundest thinker among us feels, no doubt, that the liberty of the day is a thing which it is not desirable, even if it were possible, to control, and whatever may be the dangers of freedom its advantages more than compensate for the evil.

We may, indeed, rejoice to live in the twentieth century rather than in the sixteenth; but we ought to feel at the same time that the sixteenth was bound to come four hundred years before the twentieth. Let us look to the rock whence we were hewn. The causes which led ultimately to our emancipation were not exactly such as to favour liberty at the outset. For real liberty can only be guarded by law, and whatever may be the defects of an existing social system, all right-minded men will favour the preserva-

tion of order, opposing every lawless attempt to break it up or destroy its sanctions.

Now this was just what all right-minded men did in the beginning of the sixteenth century, only the order which then existed was a dual order, which has long since passed away. There were two separate jurisdictions exercised in England as in every other country—the one a civil jurisdiction of which the King was the head; the other spiritual and ecclesiastical, of which the Pope was the head. As there was one faith in all Christendom, so there was, theoretically at least, one chief ruler in spiritual matters; and though the Greek Church refused to acknowledge him, his authority in the West was absolutely undisputed till the days of Luther in Germany and Henry VIII. in England. Luther defied the Pope because, unfortunately, he had been unfairly treated by papal authority; but Henry VIII. had no such excuse. Towards the King of England no Pope had been guilty of injustice, least of all Clement VII. His fault was rather in conceding favours which ought not to have been conceded, and the King repaid him with threats if he would not concede even more. Henry, indeed, knew perfectly well that to execute those threats would be to endanger the peace and quiet of his own kingdom, but urged on by a mad passion he would not be withheld from doing so. More saw what was at stake, and endeavoured, so far as he could, to save even the King from the effects of his own recklessness. But his chief aim was to save religion itself from insult, and public morals and social order from being subverted by the perversity of heretics.

The dual order, in Church and State.

England had not been much troubled with Lutheranism,[1] and sporadic cases of other heresies were not

[1] "Hitherto, blessed be God," writes Lee from Bordeaux to Henry VIII. on the 2nd December 1525, "your realm is safe from infection of Luther's sect, as for so much that although any, peradventure, be secretly blotted within, yet for fear of your royal Majesty, which hath drawn his sword in God's cause, they dare not openly avow."—MS. Cott., Vespasian C iii. 211-12.

much thought of till Tyndale's Testament began to be secretly diffused in the beginning of 1526. In 1527 the bishops vainly sought to buy up the whole impression and keep it out of men's hands. Early in 1528 a great sensation was created by Garrett's escape from Oxford, and on the 7th March of that year Tunstall, Bishop of London, gave Sir Thomas More a special licence to keep Lutheran books that he might write answers to them, as the only way of meeting their sophistries.[1] The merchants were already importing heretical works in great numbers from abroad, many of them, like Tyndale's Testament, printed in English at foreign presses, and people were stimulated to speak more freely than they had done on some old subjects. The authority of the clergy was attacked. The use of images in churches was denounced as idolatry; also the practice of praying to Saints, and the going on pilgrimages with the abuses to which it incidentally led. Year by year pamphlets became more virulent, and, it may be added, more unreasonable; but there was no means of stopping a flood of literature which kept pouring into the country, each volume in multitudes of copies. Moreover, it became known that some of the books were favoured by Anne Boleyn, and were read by the King himself, so that there was really no small encouragement to revile the Church and dare ecclesiastical prosecution, relying on Court favour.

Sir Thomas More engaged to answer Lutheran books.

The first work written by Sir Thomas to stem the tide of heresy was composed in the year 1528, but was only published in June 1529. It was called *The Dialogue*. By the prologue it would appear that "a

His first book, *The Dialogue*.

[1] Wilkins' *Concilia*, iii. 711-12. In giving him this commission Bishop Tunstall actually sent More some wild heretical ballads in English with some of Luther's books, that he might know the specious arguments used by the heretics, and the tortuous sophistries by which they strove to escape when they were caught. "Et ne antibatarum more cum ejusmodi larvis lucteris, ignorans ipse quod oppugnes, mitto ad te insanas in nostrate lingua istorum nænias, atque una etiam nonnullos Lutheri libros, ex quibus hæc opinionum monstra prodierunt. Quibus abs te diligenter perlectis, facilius intelligas quibus latibulis tortuosi serpentes sese condant, quibusque anfractibus elabi deprehensi studeant."

right worshipful friend" of More's had sent to him "a secret-sure friend of his," with certain "credence" to be declared to him touching the way ignorant people were calling in question many matters which were really beyond doubt. More in reply gave his mind on the subject to the messenger by word of mouth, and thought at first that was enough. But after the messenger was gone it struck him that their conversation had embraced so many subjects of high importance that it would be difficult to repeat even the substance of it all from memory, and he thought it safer to write out his own report of it for his friend's use. This he did; but even then found that he had not got rid of the business, for he learned that "divers copies" were taken of what he had written, and one was even sent oversea, where he was afraid that heretics and apostates might print it, maliciously changing his words to the worse. After that, if he endeavoured to expose the alterations, they would probably say he had corrected his own writing on the sight of theirs. So he was driven to the necessity of putting the book in print himself. This he had done, moreover, after consulting others whose judgment he esteemed, whether it was desirable to suppress particular passages; and where their opinion was divided he took that of the majority. So delicate a business did it seem to him to answer popular objections to things which the Church approved.

Now, although no one was more skilful than Sir Thomas More in manufacturing a fictitious framework for many valuable thoughts which might have been set forth in a fictitious conversation, I do not think we ought to regard the present work or the prologue just described from such a point of view. The story of the messenger, perhaps, looks artificial, but as a work of art we should not commend so much elaborate detail; while on the other hand, taking it as simply

true in all these points, it constitutes just what the author evidently intended, a perfect justification of the whole publication. This, no doubt, is a view that cannot be realised without some reflection in an age of absolute literary freedom. But such freedom was yet unthought of, and the general feeling, even of the pious and thoughtful, was that the liberty of the Press in these matters was a nuisance. Questions on which individual men would formerly have taken counsel with divines were now insidiously sown broadcast, and the authority of the clergy was decried in numerous pamphlets, whose contents were regarded by honourable men as we regard obscene literature. Yet to answer such pamphlets might be only to spread the poison by showing minds as yet unpolluted by heresy what daring questions were fermenting in secret conclaves round about them. No situation, as it seemed, required more wary management.

Then, in addition to books and pamphlets, at this particular time there were other influences stirring up unwonted feelings among the people. Bilney, who was still alive, had been compelled to abjure his heresies, but had evidently been encouraged by special favour shown him at the instance of powerful friends, and rumours were spread that he had not received justice in his examination, and was not guilty of the heresies alleged against him. The idea was sedulously cultivated that ecclesiastical tribunals could not be trusted, and the old scandal was revived that Richard Hunne, who had hung himself many years before in the Lollards' tower in St. Paul's, had really been murdered by some of the clergy. Altogether there was so much talk and murmur in the country that it might be well for a country magistrate to get at the exact truth on some points. And such seems to have been the motive of Sir Thomas More's friend, whose letter is printed at length in the beginning of *The Dialogue*, and is as follows :—

After referring to previous conversations with More, his friend writes :—

Letter to Sir Thomas touching prevalent causes of uneasiness.

I am bold at this time to send you my special secret friend, this bearer, to break with you somewhat further, partly of the same matters, partly of some other, such as are happed there since, whereof great speech and rumor runneth here; whereby ye shall have occasion more at length (if your leisure will serve) to touch certain doubts moved since of the matters treated between us before. Wherein, were it not for your other business, I would be bold on your goodness to desire you to take good time with him; and yet nevertheless do require you heartily, as your leisure will serve you, to satisfy him at the full. For he shall, how long soever he tarry therefor, give attendance unto you, days and hours, as ye may spare him time; which cannot in these things be but well bestowed, considering that the matters be such and so touching to God, as they were well worthy to set worldly business aside, specially in such need. For I assure you, some folk here talk very strangely of the things that he shall move you; not only for such words as they tell that come from thence, but also, most especially, through the occasion of some letters lewdly written hither out of London by a priest or two whom they take here for honest. But whatsoever any man tell or write I shall, for the confidence and trust I have in you, surely take and tell forth for the very truth whatsoever ye shall affirm unto my friend; whom I send unto you, not so much because I may not come myself (howbeit therefore, too), as for because I long to have him talk with you. To whom whatsoever ye say, reckon it said to myself, not only for his truth and secretness, but also for his memory; with whom to commune I trust shall not mislike you. For either mine affection blindeth me or ye shall find him wise, and, as others say that can better judge it than I, more than meanly learned, with one thing added wherewith ye be wont well to be content, a very merry wit. He is of nature nothing tongue-tied. And I have in these matters bidden him be bold, without any straining of courtesy, whereof the ceremonies in disputation marreth much of the matter while one studieth more how he may behave him than what he shall say. I have, I say, therefore boden him more to mind his matter than his courtesy, and freely to say forth not only what he thinketh but also what him list, giving no foot in disputing unto your authority but if he be

borne back with reason. Thus may ye see I am bold on your goodness to put you to labor and business and send one to face you in your own house. But so much am I the bolder for that in such challenges I know you for a ready and sure defender. And of such labor your wisdom well seeth that God is the rewarder, who long preserve you and all yours.

We are not informed who the writer of this letter was, but the contents speak for themselves in many ways; and first, we may set it down at once as incompatible with More's modesty to have written such a letter himself. It was evidently written by a very cordial admirer and influential friend of his, who sought real guidance on some matters that were disturbing the country. It seems, indeed, to have been understood long afterwards that the writer was a knight,[1] and we might even presume from internal evidence that his rank could not well be lower. As for the messenger, we know by a subsequent passage that he was a schoolmaster, who had the writer's sons at school;[2] and his conversation, as reported by More, fully bears out the letter-writer's remark that he was a man of merry wit, something akin to that of More himself; very competent to play the part allotted to him of a sort of "Devil's advocate" in behalf of lay clamour against clerical jurisdiction.

These causes discussed: viz. Bilney's case, the burning of Tyndale's New Testament, etc.

The first subject of their conversation was about Bilney, though he is never mentioned in the treatise by name, but simply as "the man ye write of." More repels the charge that he was treated with injustice by the clergy. It was said that he had been forced to abjure heresies which he never held, and had been put to penance for them. "And all this," it was urged, "was done for malice and envy, partly of some friars, against whose abusions he preached,

[1] *Eques auratus* Parsons calls him in his *Certamen Ecclesiæ*, a work still in MS. preserved at Stonyhurst College, which I have been privileged to consult by the kindness of the authorities there.

[2] More's *Works*, p. 111.

partly for that he preached boldly against the pomp and pride and other inordinate sinning (that mo men speak of than preach of) used in the clergy." It seemed to be the object "to put every man to silence that would anything speak of the faults of the clergy. And they think," added the schoolmaster, "that for none other cause was also burned at Paul's Cross the New Testament late translated into English by Master William Huchyn, otherwise called Mr. Tyndall," the object being "to keep out of the people's hands all knowledge of Christ's Gospel and of God's law, except so much only as the clergy themselves list now and then to tell us; and that, little as it is, seldom showed, yet, as it is feared, not well and truly told, but watered with false glosses and altered from the truth of the very word and sentence of Scripture, only for the maintenance of their authority." This, it was said, was the real reason not only for the burning of Tyndale's Testament, but also why the clergy long ago "by a Constitution provincial prohibited any book of Scripture to be translated into the English tongue, *fearing* men with fire as heretics who should presume to keep them, as though it were heresy for a Christian man to read Christ's Gospel."[1]

This is practically the whole indictment that More had to meet. It was an indictment virtually of the entire Church system as it then existed; and though doubtless few were prepared to maintain each separate charge, each charge derived support from the plausibility of the others, and it was impossible to discuss them in detail without going through the whole catalogue. Nay more, after defeating charge after charge, More found that his opposing counsel was able to raise new objections continually, which carried the debate through four books, ultimately to the discussion of Luther's heresies, as the schoolmaster tells him that in the university, which he had visited

[1] More's *Works*, p. 108.

since their conversations began, he found they had no ill opinion of him, but believed his books had been forbidden because they reflected on the faults of the clergy. I refrain from giving here a complete sketch of the argument in this *Dialogue*, which I have reserved for an appendix to this chapter; but it will be seen that it touches a very large number of subjects, some being current usages which we have long since abandoned, while some are questions of controversy which have been revived at different times even to the present day. But it may be well to note, among other things, More's view regarding the study of Scripture, and the objections taken to it by the schoolmaster, as representing the complainers. More admits that there could not be a higher subject of study than Holy Scripture. "And yet," he adds, "I think other liberal sciences a gift of God also and not to be cast away, but worthy to wait as handmaids to give attendance upon divinity." He would only make some suggestions, if a man had no opportunity for other studies, that it would be well to be modest and not allow himself to be carried away by the love of praise.

Here the schoolmaster takes exception to More's advice that a student should be guided by commentators and also by his natural reason, for the natural reason he considered to be the enemy of faith; but More answers at some length, "specially proving that reason is servant to faith and not enemy, and must with faith and interpretation of Scripture needs be concurrent."[1] Thus it will be seen that in the beginning of the sixteenth century heresy was still what I have shown that Lollardy was in the fifteenth —not by any means a "higher criticism" impugning biblical and Church authority by the use of reason, but really a sort of biblical superstition exalting the written word over human reason and Church authority

[1] Book i. ch. xxiii.

alike. It was the belief of "known men" in their own infallibility as interpreters of Holy Writ, and the treatment of the human reason as the enemy of faith that made zealots think themselves superior to all external authority whatever.

More answers to Fish's *Supplication for the Beggars*;

Very soon after the publication of this work More felt it necessary to answer a libellous pamphlet entitled *A Supplication for the Beggars*, which was written beyond sea by one Simon Fish, a lawyer, to suggest a wholesale confiscation of Church endowments that they might be applied to the relief of the poor. Concerning this book and its author's previous history we have the following interesting facts recorded by Foxe :—

> After that the light of the Gospel, working mightily in Germany, began to spread its beams here also in England, great stir and alteration followed in the hearts of many; so that coloured hypocrisy and false doctrine and painted holiness, began to be espied more and more by the reading of God's Word. The authority of the Bishop of Rome and the glory of his Cardinals were not so high but such as had fresh wits sparkled with God's grace began to espy Christ from Antichrist, that is, true sincerity from counterfeit religion. In the number of whom was the said Master Simon Fish, a gentleman of Gray's Inn. It happened the first year that this gentleman came to London to dwell, which was about A.D. 1525, that there was a certain play or interlude made by one Master Roo of the same Inn, gentleman, in which play partly was matter against the Cardinal Wolsey. And when none durst take upon them to play that part which touched the said Cardinal, this aforesaid Mr. Fish took upon him to do it. Hereupon great displeasure ensued against him upon the Cardinal's part; insomuch as he, being pursued by the said Cardinal, the same night that this tragedy was played, was compelled by force to void his own house, and so fled over the sea unto Tyndale. Upon occasion whereof, the next year following, this book was made (being about the year 1527), and so, not long after, in the year (as I suppose) 1528, was sent over to the lady Anne Boleyn who then lay at a place not far from the Court. This book her brother, seeing in her hand, took and read, and gave it her again,

willing her earnestly to give it to the King; which thing she did. This was (as I gather) about A.D. 1528.

a book in which the King was interested.

The King, after he had received the book, demanded of her who made it. Whereunto she answered and said, a certain subject of his, one Fish, who was fled out of the realm for fear of the Cardinal. After the King had kept the book in his bosom three or four days, as is credibly reported, such knowledge was given by the King's servants to the wife of the said Simon Fishe, that she might boldly send for her husband without all peril or danger. Whereupon she, thereby being encouraged, came first and made suit to the King for the safe return of her husband. Who, understanding whose wife she was, showed a marvellous gentle and cheerful countenance towards her, asking where her husband was. She answered, "If it like your Grace, not far off." "Then," said he, "fetch him, and he shall come and go safe without peril, and no man shall do him harm"; saying, moreover, that he had much wrong that he was from her so long, who had been absent now the space of two years and a half. In the mean time the Cardinal was deposed, and Master More set in his place in the Chancellorship.

Thus Fish's wife, being emboldened by the King's words, went immediately to her husband (being lately come over, and lying privily within a mile of the Court) and brought him to the King; which appeareth to be about A.D. 1530. When the King saw him and understood he was the author of the book, he came and embraced him with loving countenance. After long talk for the space of three or four hours, as they were riding together in hunting, the King at length dismissed him, and bade him take home his wife, for she had taken great pains for him; who answered the King again and said, he durst not so do for fear of Sir Thomas More, then Chancellor, and Stokesley, then bishop of London. This seemeth to be about A.D. 1530.

The King, taking the signet off his finger, willed him to have him recommended to the Lord Chancellor, charging him not to be so hardy as to work him any harm. Master Fish, receiving the King's signet, went and declared his message to the Lord Chancellor, who took it as sufficient for his own discharge, but he asked him if he had anything for the discharge of his wife. For she, a little before, had by chance displeased the friars by not suffering them to say their gospels in Latin in her house as they did in others, unless they would say them in English. Hereupon the lord

Chancellor, though he had discharged the man, yet not leaving his grudge towards the wife, the next morning sent his man for her to appear before him; who, had it not been for her young daughter, who then lay sick of the plague, had been like to come to much trouble. Of which plague her husband (the said Master Fish) deceasing within half a year, she afterwards married one Master James Bainham, Sir Alexander Bainham's son, a worshipful knight of Gloucestershire; which aforesaid Master James Bainham not long after was burned.[1]

This story is well vouched for, as Foxe informs us in a note that he had it from the wife of Serjeant Roo, the composer of the interlude. And though she must have related it to him long after the actual occurrences, it really requires but little chronological adjustment. The interlude at Gray's Inn, as we know from Hall's *Chronicle*,[2] was played in the Christmas season of 1526, not 1525. It had been composed, as Hall asserts, by Master John Roo, serjeant-at-law, twenty years before. Hall tells us this to insinuate the great injustice of the Cardinal treating it as designed to reflect upon him, when it was written before he ever had much influence. But Serjeant Roo's own wife and Foxe were quite clear that the play, as then produced at least, contained "matter against the Cardinal Wolsey," which made it very venturesome "to play that part which touched the said Cardinal," as the event proved that it was. In short, both Serjeant Roo and Fish had evidently presumed a little too much upon Wolsey's forbearance, and had occasion to repent it. Serjeant Roo was committed for a while to the Fleet—a contemporary letter says, to the Tower.[3] Fish fled abroad, and took his revenge by a libel, not only on the Cardinal but on the clergy. But by and by times changed. The Cardinal was no longer supported by the King, and Sir Thomas More took his place as

[1] Foxe, iv. 657-8.

[2] Hall's *Chronicle*, p. 719.

[3] *L. P.*, IV. 2854.

Chancellor. In that capacity it was Sir Thomas's duty to arrest heretics and prevent them poisoning the public with seditious and revolutionary libels. But the King, having now a great desire to make the clergy uncomfortable, called Fish to his presence and had a long confidential talk with him, giving him his signet in the end as a token to Sir Thomas More to protect him from any legal process. More was bound to respect the King's signet, but did not find that it protected Fish's wife, who, however, having trouble enough at home by the illness of her daughter, was left unmolested.

Foxe then proceeds to tell us quite another story of how the King's notice was called to his book. It was by his footman Edmund Moddis, with whom he was "in talk of religion and of the new books that were come from beyond the seas." Moddis brought two merchants to the King's presence, one of whom produced the book, and on being asked if he could read it, said, "Yea, if it please your Grace to hear it." "I thought so," the King replied, "for, if need were, thou canst say it without book." The man read the whole of it, and at the end the King made a long pause and said: "If a man should pull down an old stone wall and begin at the lower part, the upper part thereof might chance to fall upon his head." The advice contained in the book, apparently, was too thoroughgoing and dangerous to be adopted all at once. The King, however, took the book and put it in his desk, commanding the merchants on their allegiance not to tell any man that he had seen it.[1] Of course this meant that the clergy were to be left free to denounce and prosecute heresy, as injurious to Christian faith and public order, while the King would secretly enjoy what the heretics had written, and see what use he could make of them for purposes of his own.

[1] Foxe, iv. 658.

Let us now consider what sort of a publication it was that gave him such secret pleasure. It was a petition addressed to himself, professedly by "the wretched hideous monsters on whom scarcely for horror any eye dare look, the foul, unhappy sort (*i.e.* company) of lepers and other sore people, needy, impotent, blind, lame, and sick, that live only by alms." Their number, it was said, had "so sore increased that all the alms of all the well-disposed people of this your realm are not half enough to sustain them, but that for very constraint they die for hunger." And this arose because in past times there had "craftily crept" into the realm another sort of beggars, not impotent but strong, holy, and idle vagabonds, who with the craft of Satan had increased and become a kingdom. "These are not the herds but the ravenous wolves going in herds' clothing, devouring the flock—bishops, abbots, priors, deacons, archdeacons, suffragans, priests, monks, canons, friars, pardoners, and sumners." They had got into their hands more than the third part of the realm—the best manors, lands, and territories, "with the tenth part of all the corn, meadow, pasture grass, wood, colts, calves, lambs, pigs, geese, and chickens," and vast emoluments besides by probates, offerings at pilgrimages, and so forth. There were 52,000 parish churches in England (so the pamphleteer affirms as a fact), and if there were but ten households in a parish, that would make 520,000 households, each of which contributed a penny a quarter to each of the orders of friars: sum total, £43,333 : 6 : 8 sterling, "whereof not four hundred years past they had not one penny." Its contents.

And what did these "holy thieves" do with all their wealth? "Truly nothing but exempt themselves from the obedience of your Grace. Nothing but translate all rule, power, lordship, authority, obedience and dignity from your Grace unto them! Nothing but that all your subjects should fall into

disobedience and rebellion against your Grace and be under them, as they did unto your noble predecessor King John; who, because he would have punished certain traitors that had conspired with the French King to have deposed him from his crown and dignity (among whom a clerk called Stephen, whom afterwards, against the King's will the Pope made bishop of Canterbury, was one), interdicted his land. For this matter your most noble realm wrongfully (alas for shame!) hath stood tributary, not unto any kind of temporal prince, but unto a cruel, devilish blood-supper, drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Christ ever since."

So the pamphleteer taught among other things that King John was a "noble," ill-used sovereign, and Stephen Langton a rebel! And he goes on to make still more outrageous imputations against the clergy. But these specimens of the quality of his work may, perhaps, suffice. That it should have been thought worthy of an answer from the pen of Sir Thomas More seems really not a little humiliating. But Sir Thomas knew the temper of the times, and how much mischief could be done by pure scurrility and gross exaggeration and lying. Such books, indeed, studiously disseminated, might easily be used as a basis for political action if favoured by authority. So to defeat the *Supplication of Beggars* he drew up another supplication, very much in the same form, entitled *The Supplication of Souls.* For there was another company of wretched people requiring relief besides the inmates of lazar houses, namely the inmates of Purgatory, who are represented as crying out in the following fashion:—

More's answer, *The Supplication of Souls.*

"To all good Christian people. In most piteous wise continually calleth and crieth upon your devout charity and most tender pity for help, comfort, and relief your late acquaintance, kindred, spouses, companions, playfellows, and friends, and now your

humble and unacquainted and half-forgotten suppliants, poor prisoners of God, the silly souls in Purgatory here abiding and enduring the grievous pains and hot cleansing fire that fretteth and burneth out the rusty and filthy spots of our sin, till the mercy of Almighty God, the rather by your good and charitable means, vouchsafe to deliver us hence."

These souls, although they had been by many much forgotten by negligence, had been always remembered by good folk and helped by private prayers, especially by daily masses. But now of late there were sprung up seditious persons who not only laboured to destroy the spiritualty but also to raise a pestilent opinion against them, the souls in Purgatory, and deprive them of the comfort hitherto received from charitable alms. Hence it is, they tell the reader, that "we" who seldom disturbed your sleep before must now cry at your ears, even when you would rest (which we never do), to put before you this supplication, which please think over parcelmeal at leisure. It may be a wholesome triacle against the deadly poison of those who would persuade you that there is no Purgatory; the very worst of whom "is that despyteous and despiteful person which of late, under pretext of piety, made and put forth among you a book that he named *The Supplication for the Beggars.*" Though this unhappy book touches us very near, yet we are much more moved to warn the world of its venom for your sake who live on earth, lest for lack of belief in Purgatory many of you go the straight way to Hell. The author, who evades punishment among you by his anonymity, is not unknown among us, for we have several of his acquaintance here, whom God gave grace to repent at their death, and his performances have been reported here with exultation by his and your ghostly enemy, the Devil.

Such was the framework of More's answer, and with this beginning he exposes the thorough dis-

honesty and impudent falsehoods of the "Beggars' proctor" at considerable length. I cannot afford space for a complete account of the treatise, which, though far from uninteresting, is much longer than the work to which it is a reply, and is divided into two books. In the second the author urges the evidences of the existence of Purgatory which he finds both in reason and revelation, and deeply earnest as the tone is throughout, there is a little touch of More's own humour towards the end. Although written in the very year in which he was appointed Lord Chancellor of England, More was, when he wrote it, only Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Parliament of 1529 had not yet met, but More apparently suspected that there was much mischief brewing, which by this method he was earnestly seeking to avert. Probably he made Fish himself ashamed of what he had written, for before his death, which on Foxe's showing must have happened about the year 1530, "God gave him such grace" (to quote More again) "that he repented himself and came into the Church again, and forsook and forswore all the whole bill of those heresies." [1]

After More was made Lord Chancellor in 1529 it might have been supposed that he would have less time for literary exercises. But even if he had desired repose, the heretics with whom he was now in contention would not let him rest. And, chief of all, Tyndale had put forth *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, in which, as shown on the title-page, "First he declareth what the Church is, and giveth a reason of certain words which Master More rebuketh in the translation of the New Testament; after that he answereth particularly unto every chapter which seemeth to have any appearance of truth thorow all his four books." Of the contents I need only say in a general way that Tyndale shows that he had

He next answers Tyndale.

[1] More's *English Works*, p. 881.

avoided using the word "Church" as an ambiguous term, one of its meanings being a place where Christian people of old used to resort to hear the Word preached and prayers put up in a tongue that all men understood; "where now we have but voices without signification, and buzzings, howlings, and cryings, as it were the hollowing of foxes or baiting of bears, and wonder at disguisings and toys, whereof we know no meaning." In another sense the word was taken to mean all that embraced the name of Christ, and sometimes specially the elect, but the clergy had appropriated it to themselves; so he had rendered the word *ecclesia* by "congregation."

From this little taste of the commencement the reader will see that Tyndale was not at all disposed to make things pleasanter, but railed at consecrated authority and usages quite as much as ever. More accordingly could not let him go on without rebuke, and in 1532 got William Rastell to print for him *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, in three "books," making up a folio volume of 326 pages. This, however, was only the first part of a work which he completed next year, after he had ceased to be Lord Chancellor, in another like folio volume containing Books iv. to viii., in 578 pages. The first volume had a long preface, showing how fast heresy and irreverence were growing. It begins as follows:—

"Our Lord send us now some years as plenteous of good corn as we have had some years of late, plenteous of evil books. For they have grown so fast and sprongen up so thick, full of pestilent errors and pernicious heresies, that they have infected and killed, I fear me, more selye symple soules than the famine of the dear years destroyed bodies."

And he suggests that the abundance of this crop has very likely created the scarcity of the other, besides war, sickness, and mortality. These heretics, he says,

are so shameless that they call good Christian people idolaters, though they know well that the Church honours images only for the sake of the saints, and the saints only for God's sake. Tyndale himself knows this, who has railed against his own conscience, and in his last answer to More's book has gone so far as to revoke almost all he ever said before, and acknowledge that a Christian man may have images and kneel before them too, as More will show. If idolatry be treating the idol as God, what idolatry is it in Tyndale to call his heresies faith and make men serve the devil while they ween to serve God? If it be infidelity to believe with the Turks in the Alchoran, how much more so in Tyndale purposely to mistranslate Christ's Gospel to set forth as great heresies? What can be worse than to abuse the Scripture of God to colour their false belief? "And what can be a worse belief than to believe that the sacraments that God hath ordained by his Holy Spirit be but inventions of man, or as Tyndale saith of confession, but invention of the Devil?"

It might be enough to give this little outline of the commencement with part quotations to show the feeling which prompted More to undertake this very laborious work, for the work itself I do not propose to analyse. But another passage describing more particularly—in fact, giving a catalogue of—those objectionable books which were now pouring into England at a rate hitherto unknown, is so important that I venture on a rather lengthy extract:—

Alarming increase of heretical publications.

Of these books of heresies there be so many made within these few years, what by Luther himself and his fellows, and afterwards by the new sects sprungen out of his, which like the children of Vippara would now gnaw out their mother's belly, that the bare names of those books were almost enough to make a book, and of every sort of those books be some brought into this realm and kept in hucker mucker by some shrewd masters that keep them for no good. Beside the

books of Latin, French, and Dutch, in which there are of all these evil sects an innumerable sort, there are, made in the English tongue—First, Tyndale's New Testament, father of them all by reason of his false translating. And after that the Five Books of Moses translated by the same man, we need not doubt in what manner when we know by what man and for what purpose. Then have ye his Introduction into St. Paul's Pistle, with which he introduceth and bringeth his readers into a false understanding of St. Paul, making them, among many other heresies, believe that St. Paul were in the mind that only faith were alway sufficient for salvation, and that men's good works were nothing worth, nor could no thank deserve, nor no reward in Heaven, though they were wrought in grace. And these things teacheth Tyndale as the mind of St. Paul, where St. Paul sayeth himself that they which so misconstrue him to the depraving of men's good works be well worthy damnation. Then have we by Tyndale *The Wicked Mammona*, by which many a man hath been beguiled and brought into many wicked heresies; which thing (saving that the Devil is ready to put out men's eyen that are content willingly to wax blind) were else in good faith to me no little wonder, for never was there made a more foolish frantic book. Then have we Tyndale's book of *Obedience* whereby we be taught to disobey the doctrine of Christ's Catholic Church and set his holy sacraments at naught. Then have we fro Tyndale the First Epistle of St. John in such wise expowned that I daresay that blessed Apostle, rather than his holy words were in such a sense believed of all Christian people, had liever his Epistle had never been put in writing. Then have we the *Supplication of Beggars*, a piteous beggarly book wherein he would have all the souls in Purgatory beg all about for naught. Then have we from George Jaye, otherwise called Clarke, a goodly godly Epistle, wherein he teacheth divers other heresies, but specially that men's vows and promises made of chastity be not lawful, nor can bind no man in conscience, but he may wed when he will. And this man, considering that when a man teacheth one thing and doeth himself another, the people set the less by his preaching, determined therefore with himself that he would of his preaching show himself ensample. And therefore, being priest, he hath beguiled a woman and wedded her, that poor woman, I ween, unaware that he is priest. Howbeit, if it be not done already, it is well likely now that, but if (*i.e.* unless) God be her special guide, he shall by leisure work

her and win her to his own heresy. Then have we an Exposition also upon the Seventh Chapter of St. Paul's Pistle to the Corinthies, by which exposition in like wise priests, freres, monks and nuns be taught that evangelical liberty that they may run out a caterwawing and so wow and wed and lawfully live in lechery. That work hath no name of the maker, but some wene it was Frere Roy, which, when he was fallen in heresy, then found it unlawful to live in chastity and ran out of his Order, and hath since sought many a false unlawful way to live by; wherein he made so many changes, that as Bayfield, another heretic, and late burned in Smithfield, told unto me, he made a meet end at last, and was burned in Portingale. Then have we *The Examination of Thorpe*,[1] put forth, as it is said, by George Constantine (by whom there hath been, I wot well, of that sort great plenty sent into the realm). In that book the heretic that made it as a communication between the bishop and his chaplains and himself, maketh all the parties speak as himself liketh, and layeth nothing spoken against his heresies but such as himself would seem solemnly to soyle. Whose book when any good Christian man readeth that hath either learning or any natural wit, [he] shall not only be well able to perceive him for a foolish heretic, and his arguments easy to answer, but shall also see that he showeth himself a false liar in his rehearsal of the matter, wherein he maketh the tother part sometime speak for his commodity such manner things as no man would have done that were not a very wild goose. Then have we *Jonas*[2] made out by Tyndale, a book that whoso delight therein shall stand in peril that Jonas was never so swallowed up with the whale as by the delight of that book a man's soul may be so swallowed up by the Devil that he shall never have the grace to get out again. Then have we, by Tyndale also, the *Answer* to my *Dialogue*; whereof I shall nothing now need to say because the confutation of that Answer is the matter of my present book. Then have we also the book of Frith against Purgatory, the errors of which book I shall hereafter, God willing, declare you. Then have ye a book of Luther translated into English

[1] William Thorpe, who was examined by Archbishop Arundel in 1407. See p. 57 *ante*. The examination is printed in full in Foxe, iii. 250-85. From what Foxe himself says at p. 249 we might very well suspect that the document had been tampered with, even if More had not here told us so.

[2] *Jonas in English* appears in a list of books prohibited by Stokesley, Bishop of London, on the First Sunday in Advent (3rd Dec.) 1531. See my *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, p. 90.

in the name of Brightewell—but, as I am informed, the book was translated by Frith—a book of such sort as Tyndale never made a more foolish, nor more full of false lies. And surely Frith's prologue, if it be his, as it is said, is right sutely (*sic*) and a very meet cover for such a cup as bringeth the people a draught of deadly poison. Then have we *The Practice of Prelates*, wherein Tyndale had went (weened) to have made a special show of his high worldly wit, and that men should have seen therein that there were nothing done among princes but that he was fully advertised of all the secrets, and that so far forth that he knew the privy practice made between the King's Highness and the late lord Cardinal and the Reverend Father Cuthbert, then Bishop of London, and me, that it was devised wilily that the Cardinal should leave the Chancellorship to me and the Bishopric of Durham to my lord of London for a while, till he list to take them both again.[1] Was not this a wily drift, trow you? which, while every man seeth there was no man so mad to tell Tyndale, no man doubteth but that Tyndale devised it of his own imagination; and then needeth no man to doubt what manner a brain Tyndale hath, that dreameth such frantic drifts. Then have we now come forth the book of Frere Barnes,[2] sometime doctor in Cambridge, which was for heresy before this time abjured and is at this day comen to the realm by safe-conduct which, at his humble suit, the King's Highness, of his blessed disposition, condescended to grant him, to the end that, if there might yet any spark of grace be founden in him, it might be kept kindled and increased rather than the man to be cast away.[3] Which manner of

[1] Wolsey surrendered the Great Seal on the 17th Oct. 1529, and it was given to Sir Thomas More as Chancellor on the 25th. Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, was promoted to Wolsey's bishopric of Durham on the 25th March 1530.

[2] "The Supplication of doctour Barnes unto the moost gracyous Kynge Henrye the eyght, with the declaration of his articles condēned for heresy by the byshops." Printed "at London in Poules churchyard at the Signe of S. Augustyne by Hugh Syngelton." Of course this is a justification of himself from the charges of heresy on which he was condemned by a "declaration" (or vindication) of the articles of which he was found guilty. It appears to have been sent over to England in MS. in the middle of November 1531, and printed in London with the King's connivance (*L. P.*, v. 532, 533). Barnes himself had arrived in London by the middle of next month in a secular habit, when he had frequent conference with the Franciscan friar Nicolas del Borgo, who wrote much in the King's favour on the divorce question (*L. P.*, v. 593).

[3] This was a plausible way of putting it, which no doubt was adopted by the King to save appearances, and accepted by More accordingly. But even the Imperial ambassador, Chapuys, knew quite well at the time that it was

Christian zeal and princely benignity his Grace had before used, both to Richard Bayfelde and George Constantyne, which came over hither without safe-conduct upon the only trust of his gracious forgiveness and had it. And thereupon, too, by and by, both twain deceitfully did abuse his goodness, and brought in again moe of Tyndale's books and false heresies afresh; whereof, as God hath in His justice requit the tone, so mought His mercy by grace amend the tother. But to speak of Frere Barnes' book, surely of all their books that yet came abroad in English (of all which was never none wise or good) was never none yet so bad, so foolish, nor so false as his, as it hath since his coming been plainly proved in his face, and that in such wise that when the books he citeth and allegeth in his book were brought forth before him, and his ignorance showed him, himself did in divers things confess his oversight, and clearly knowledged that he had mistaken and wrong understanden the places; and was in such wise finally confounded with shame that he was in a mamering [*hesitation*] whether he would return again over the sea, or tarry still here and turn again to Christ's Catholic Church. And therefore he desired that he might have a learned man then present assigned unto him for the further instruction of his conscience, which was granted him, and what will further come thereon God knoweth. If God give him the grace to amend, every good man will be glad thereof. If he have so far gone against God's truth and thereby grieved God in such wise that God have already given him over for ever, or else that, though God offer His grace again, the malice of the man's will withstand it yet, and reject it, it is not then to be doubted but God will find a time for him well enough to show His justice on him as he hath done upon such other, and namely of late in Swycherland upon Zwinglius, which was the first that brought Barnes's heresy hither concerning the sacrament of the Altar.[1] But as for hence he shall, I am sure, have leave to depart safe according to the King's safe-conduct. And yet hath he so demeaned himself since his coming hither that he hath clearly broken and forfeited his safe-conduct, and lawfully might be burned for his heresies, if we would lay his heresies and his

not Barnes who solicited leave to return to England half so much as the King who solicited his return. See last note.

[1] Zwinglius was defeated and slain in the battle of Cappel on the 11th October 1531. Barnes ultimately became Lutheran instead of Zwinglian in his view of the sacrament.

demeanour sith his coming hither, both twain, unto his charge. But let him go this once, for God shall find His time full well.

Then have we further, besides Barnes's book, *The ABC for Children*. And because there is no grace therein, lest we should lack prayers, we have *The Primer* and the *The Ploughman's Prayer*, and a book of other small devotions, and then the whole Psalter too. After the Psalter children were wont to go to their Donate[1] and their accidence, but now they go straight to Scripture. And thereto have we as a Donate the book of *The Pathway to Scripture*, and for an accidence, because we should be good scholars shortly, and be soon sped, we have the whole *Sum of Scripture* in a little book; so that, after these books well learned, we be meet for Tyndale's *Pentateuch* and Tyndale's *Testament*, and all the tother high heresies that he and Jay, and Frith, and Frere Barnes, teach in all their books beside. Of all which heresies the seed is sown and prettily sprongen up in these little books before. For the *Primer* and *Psalter*, prayers and all, were translated and made in this manner by none other but heretics. The Psalter was translated by George Jaye, the priest that is wedded now, and I hear say the Primer too; wherein the Seven Psalms be set in without the Litany lest folk should pray to Saints. And the *Dirige* is left out clean lest a man might hap to pray thereon for his father's soul. In their Kalender before their devout prayers they have set us a new Saint, Sir Thomas Hitton, the heretic that was burned in Kent, of whom I shall tell you more after. Him have they set on St. Mathie his Even by the name of St. Thomas the Martyr. A long work would it be to rehearse you all their books, for there be yet moe than I know. Against all which the King's high wisdom politicly provided, in that his Highness by his proclamations forbode any manner English books printed beyond the sea to be brought into this realm, or any to be sold printed within this realm, but if [*i.e.* unless] the name of the printer and his dwelling place were set upon the book. But yet so is it, as I said before, that of these ungracious books, full of pestilent, poisoned heresies that have in other realms already killed by schisms and war many thousand bodies, and by sinful errors and abominable heresies many moe thousand souls, have now a few malicious mischievous persons brought into their realm, and labor and

[1] The Latin grammar of Donatus.

enforce themselves in all that ever they may, to corrupt and infect all good and virtuous people. Nor no man is there anywhere living more studious and busy to do himself good than those envious wretches be laborious and fervent to do all other men harm in body, substance, and soul.[1]

More goes on to show that "a few ungracious folk" had fled the realm for heresy. Their captains were priests, monks, and friars who never said mass or matins, nor even came to church, but "talking still of faith, would seem Christ's apostles and play the Devil's disours [*tale-tellers*], speaking much of the Spirit with no more devotion than dogs; divers of them priests, monks, and freres, not let to wed harlots and then call them wives." The rest were penniless refugees maintained by evil disposed persons in England, who employed them to seek out heresies and send them thither. "Which books, albeit they neither can be there printed without great cost, nor here sold without great adventure and peril, yet cease they not with money sent from hence to print them there, and send them hither by the whole fattes full at once, and in some places, looking for no lucre, cast them abroad by night, so great a pestilent pleasure have some deviled people caught, with the labor, travail, cost, charge, peril, harm, and hurt of themself, to seek the destruction of other." [2]

Publications by heretics in exile subsidised.

The heretics, moreover, were very glad and gloried in the fact when any man was brought to the fire through their books.

Thus rejoiced Tyndale in the death of Hytton, of whose burning he boasteth in his *Answer* to my *Dialogue*, where he writeth thereof that, where I said I had never founden nor heard of any of them but that he would forswear to save his life, I had heard, he sayeth, of Sir Thomas Hytton whom the Bishops of Rochester and Canterbury slew at Maidstone. Of this man they so highly rejoice that they have, as I said, set his name in their Kalendar before a book of their English

[1] More's *Works*, pp. 341-3.

[2] More's *Works*, p. 344.

prayers by the name of St. Thomas the Martyr in the Vigil of the Blessed Apostle St. Mathie, the 23d day of February, and have put out for him the holy doctor and glorious martyr, St. Policarpus, the blessed bishop and the disciple of St. John the Evangelist, for that was his day indeed, and so is it in some Kalendars marked. Now to the intent ye may somewhat see what good Christian faith Sir Thomas Hytton was of, this new Saint of Tyndale's canonization, in whose burning Tyndale so gaily glorieth, and which hath his holy day so now appointed to him that St. Policarpus must give him place in the Kalendar, I shall somewhat show you what wholesome heresies this holy martyr held. First ye shall understand that he was a priest and, falling to Luther's sect, and after to the sect of Frere Huskin[1] and Zwynglius, cast off matins and mass and all divine service, and so became an apostle sent to and fro between our English heretics beyond the sea and such as were at home. Now happed it so that after he had visited so his holy congregations in divers corners and luskes lanes and comforted them in the Lord to stand stiff with the Devil in their errors and heresies, as he was going back again at Gravesend, God, considering the great labor that he had taken already, and determining to bring his business to his well deserved end, gave him suddenly such a favor and so great a grace in the visage that every man that beheld him took him for a thief. For whereas there had been certain linen cloths pilfered away that were hanging on an hedge, and Sir Thomas Hitton was walking not far off suspiciously in the meditation of his heresies, the people, doubting that the beggarly knave had stolen the clouts, fell in question with him and searched him, and so found certain letters secretly conveyed in his coat, written from evangelical brethren here unto the evangelical heretics beyond the sea. And upon those letters founden he was, with his letters brought before the most Reverend Father in God the Archbishop of Canterbury, and afterward, as well by his lordship as by the Reverend Father the Bishop of Rochester, examined, and after for his abominable heresies delivered to the secular hands and burned. In his examination he refused to be sworn to say truth, affirming that neither bishop nor Pope had authority to compel him to swear; which point, although it be a false heresy, yet is it likely that he refused the oath

Their martyr, Thomas Hitton.

[1] Johann Hausschein, better known since as Œcolampadius, the name he assumed in the fashion of scholars who translated their own names into Greek.

rather of frowardness than of any respect that he had, either in keeping or breaking. For never could I find heretic yet that any conscience had in any oath. And of truth Tyndale in his answer to my *Dialogue* teacheth them that they may break their oath and be forsworn without any scruple at all.

His father and his mother he would not be aknowen of what they were, they were some so good folk of likelihood that he could not abide the glory. He would not be aknowen that himself was priest, but said that he had by the space of nine years been beyond the sea and there lived by the joiner's craft. Howbeit he said that he had alway, as his leisure would give him leave, and as he could find opportunity in places where he came, taught the Gospel of God after his own mind and his own opinion, not forcing of the determination of the Church, and said that he intended to his power to persevere still.

Whatever his zeal for what he considered the Gospel, Hitton was certainly rather an ambiguous character to be placed in a list of Saints and Martyrs. More adds a brief account of his teaching, which I condense as follows. He admitted baptism to be a sacrament necessary to salvation, but considered that any lay person might baptise just as well as a priest, "were the child in necessity or not," and the form would be much better if the words were spoken in English. Whether matrimony was a sacrament he did not know, but it was "a thing necessary and of Christian people to be observed." It need not be solemnised at church, though that was good. "The man means by likelihood," says More, "that it was good enough to wed upon a cushion when the dogs be abed; as their priests wed, I ween, where their persons be known." Extreme unction or annealing and confirmation were no sacraments, nor necessary to the soul. The Sacrament of Order was none, but only a human ordinance. The mass ought never to be said; confession and penance were unnecessary. Purgatory he denied, and religious vows he said availed not; it was a sin to take them. No man had any free will

after he had once sinned. All divine services might be left unsaid without sin, and all images should be thrown out of the Church. Whatever the Pope or a General Council might ordain, besides what is expressly commanded in Scripture, a man might break without sin. Capital punishments were against the Gospel. The Sacrament of the Altar was a necessary sacrament, but consecration made no change of substances. Being found obstinate in these heresies, notwithstanding much charitable pains taken with him, he was ultimately burnt.

More was grieved to the heart by the propagation of doctrines like these, and expresses himself, not only about heresies but heretics, in language which naturally shocks the reader now, when not only opinions are free but many of those heresies have come to be generally accepted as sound belief. But there was no question as yet about a law of liberty. The very establishment of such a law, if any one had dared to propose it, would have been felt as an outrage upon all that was sacred. Nor was liberty, as the state of England showed in the following reign, and still more the state of Scotland a little later, the real aim of the heretics themselves. They would, and they did, throw out of the Church the images that were still venerated. They would, and they did, encourage dishonourable marriages among the priesthood. They would, and they did, put down the mass as sinful, and oppose all hitherto acknowledged authority in the Church. In short, their principles tended to unhinge society by destroying the sanctions of all order.

Yet the attempt to counteract all the "poisonous" literature of the times was about as hopeless as the attempt of the bishops to buy up the whole impression of Tyndale's Testament. Perhaps even more so. More, however, was feverishly doing his very utmost, for the inundation of such books was altogether a new thing, and if they could not be suppressed he felt that the

books of Tyndale, at least, must be answered. Graces of style he could hardly think of in the midst of such arduous work, but the work itself seemed to him imperative, and his tone was more serious than it had been in the *Dialogue*.

Writing in defence of the faith, indeed, was his main business now so long as he was free to do so. Well he knew, no man better, the great crisis that had arisen in religion, and which the King's conduct every day was making more acute. Just after finishing the *Confutation of Tyndale* he obtained leave at last to resign the office of Lord Chancellor, which he had originally accepted on false assurances from the King, and which he felt was made more intolerable by the measures continually taken against the Church. In fact, it would seem that the King's main object in appointing him had been to make the world believe either that he had then ceased to pursue his project of divorce, or that if he attempted further proceedings it would be by methods strictly in accordance with laws everywhere recognised. But the divorce was still pursued, and Sir Thomas, as Chancellor, was required to notify to the House of Commons the opinions obtained from universities against marriage with a deceased brother's wife. As Chancellor, moreover, he was theoretically the keeper of the King's conscience, and could not but feel that, as a matter of fact, he was absolutely without control over that which he was supposed to guard. He resigned on the day of the submission of the clergy, 16th May 1532. After which his pen was more active than ever.

More's *Apology*,

In 1533 appeared *The Apology of Sir Thomas More*, called forth by various criticisms on his previous writings, and especially by an imputation, fastened upon him mainly, we may be sure, by courtiers, that he had shown himself too partial to the clergy. For an example of true impartiality he found himself referred to an anonymous book just published, which

we know to have been written by the lawyer, Christopher St. German, entitled *A Treatise Concerning the Division between the Spiritualty and Temporalty.* The real object of this work, of which the reader has already heard,[1] was evidently to assist the King in his proceedings against the Church, but in form it was apparently written from quite another point of view. The author professes to deplore the fact that whereas in times past charity had generally prevailed, both among laity and clergy, there now reigned "envy, pride, division, and strife"; and with a fine show of impartiality he set himself to investigate the causes and to suggest a more conciliatory bearing on both sides. He, however, insinuates much against the clergy with the words, "Some say," and More compares this "Pacifier," as he calls him, to a man who should propose to mediate between a married couple by informing them of what their neighbours say of them, especially of the poor woman, and telling her that till she is meek her husband's anger will never be appeased.

in which he answers St. German.

It is desirable, however, to give one little extract from this *Treatise*, which, whatever may be its value as regards the general argument, undoubtedly points to one fact as to the social position of the clergy deplored by many good men of that day:—

> Another occasion of this division hath partly risen by temporal men that have desired much to have the familiarity of priests in their games and disports, and have used to make much more of them (*i.e.* those) that were compenable (*companionable*) than of them that were not so, and have called them good fellows and good companions. And many also would have chaplains, which they would not only suffer, but also command, to go on hunting, hawking, and such other vain disports. And some would let them lie among other lay servants, where they could neither use prayer nor contempla-

[1] See pp. 276, 308 *ante.*

tion. And some of them would suffer them to go in liveries not convenient in colour for a priest to wear, and would also many times set them to worldly offices, as, to be bailiffs, receivers or stewards; and then, when they have by such occasion been much beaten and greatly exercised in such worldly business, so that the inward devotion of the heart hath been in them as cold and as weak, in manner, as in laymen, yet, if any benefice have fallen void of their gift, they would prefer them to it, either as in recompence of their business and labors, or for that they were good companions, rather than another good devout man, that percase is learned and keepeth himself fro such worldly vanities and idle company, or that is disposed sometime to admonish charitably such as he is in company with, of such defaults as he seeth or heareth of them, and that few men do love to hear; and therefore will they prefer *them* and let *them* alone. And yet when they have so done, they will anon speak evil of priests,[1] etc.

This is undoubtedly a true picture of a crying evil. But the Reformation did little to mend matters in this respect, except that the Puritanism which followed set its face strongly against games and disports, hunting and hawking, and coloured liveries. Austerity was enforced, not on the clergy only, but on all men. But, as to their particular status, the clergy were quite as dependent as ever, or even more so.

St. German, however, it is to be feared, was not seeking reform in the Church. His favourite study had been for many years the common law of England, and its relation to equity and spiritual law. He was already known as the author of the celebrated treatise, commonly referred to as *Doctor and Student*, the main substance of which he first gave to the world in the year 1528 in a Latin form as *Dialogus de fundamentis legum Anglie et de Conscientia*, and then three years later, more fully developed, in two English dialogues, "Betwixt a Doctor of Divinity and a Student in the Laws of England." That he was animated in the first instance by a pure love of his

[1] From chap. vi. ff. 14, 15.

profession seems perfectly clear; and the modern reader will go along with him, no doubt, in one main tendency of his argument, showing that where the common law of the land had laid down principles at variance with those of the canon law, the decisions of the common law must stand against those of ecclesiastical tribunals. But it is clear that he was rather too glad to apply general principles in furtherance of the King's policy. The second dialogue of *Doctor and Student* is clearly intended to favour the legislation of 1529, and the treatise on *The Division between the Spiritualty and the Temporalty* was really well calculated to increase the evil that it professed to deplore. It is not wonderful, therefore, that Sir Thomas More answered it with that gentle irony which he knew so well how to administer.

Further controversy with St. German.

St. German at once replied to More's *Apology* by a dialogue entitled *Salem and Bizance*, in which the one speaker, Salem (named after Jerusalem), set forth the claims of the priesthood, while the other, Bizance (Byzantium), represented the authority of civil law. To this More published, still in the year 1533, an answer entitled *The Debellacyon of Salem and Bizance*. In the beginning of this year he had also written the answer to Frith, of which I have spoken in a previous chapter, and that answer he had put in print; but as Frith had only circulated his treatise in MS., he caused it to be kept back from publication. Just after Frith's death, however, his treatise was printed on the Continent, and copies were expected in England at Bartholomew tide, that is to say, in August. After that date More had not yet discovered whether any had actually arrived, when his attention was turned to another book (or pamphlet rather) that had just appeared with no author's name attached, called *The Supper of the Lord*.[1] This was written, he

[1] "The Supper of the Lorde after the true meanyng of the Sixte of John and the xi. of the fyrst Epistle to the Corinthiās, wherunto is added an

believed, either by Tyndale or by George Joy, and though partly meant as an answer to his own writings, and (especially his unpublished reply to Frith) which the author pretended to regard rather as mockery than as argument,[1] it had been carefully kept out of his sight, and circulated only in secret among the brethren. It consisted but of thirty-two leaves, yet it was divided into two parts, the first part containing only fourteen leaves, which were devoted to a comment on our Lord's words in the latter part of the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel (explained in a way quite opposed to the Church's teaching), while the second part was on Christ's "Maunday" and the institution of His Supper. On this More at once caused the printer to issue to the public his reply to Frith, and followed it up with a very long and elaborate treatise bearing the title, "The Answer to the First Part of the Poisoned Book which a Nameless Heretic hath named *The Supper of the Lord.*"[2]

Answer to *The Supper of the Lord.*

As the little pamphlet to which More replied was divided into two parts, More purposed to make a reply in two parts also, and this was only the first part, though divided into five books extending to no less than 230 closely printed pages in double columns

Epystle to the reader. And incidentally in the exposition of the Supper is cõfuted the letter of master More against John Fryth." The title-page is dated "Anno MCCCCC. xxxiii. v daye of Apryll." The "added" Epistle is prefixed to the work, and signed "Robert Crowley," apparently the very earliest publication of that well-known controversialist. It covers eight pages, and makes five leaves along with the title-page. The work itself, apart from title-page and epistle, consists of thirty-two leaves, as More says. The pages are not numbered.

[1] On the last page is the following ungracious sarcasm founded on a passage in More's *Supplication of Soules*:—"And as for Mr. More whom the verité most offendeth, and doth but mock it out when he can not sole it (*assoyle* it, *i.e.* answer it), he knoweth my name well enough. For the Devil, his guardian, as himself saith, cometh every day into Purgatory (if *there* be any day at all) with his heinous and envious laughter, gnashing his teeth and grinning, telling the 'proctor' with his Pope's prisoners whatsoever is here done or written against them, both his person and name too. And he is now, I daresay, as great with his guardian as ever he was." It is curious that More (*Works*, p. 1037) misquotes this passage, and says the author speaks of him as "Master Mock," whom the "verity most offendeth."

[2] More's *Works*, 1035-1138. See especially pp. 1036-38.

in the collected edition of his English Works! Never did little pamphlet meet with such an elaborate answer, the "poisoned book" being in More's estimation so very poisonous. But the intended second part was never written, the obvious reason being that from the very beginning of the year 1534 trouble was prepared for More—partly, indeed, arising out of this very reply to the "nameless heretic," which though printed, and indeed published, before Christmas 1533, was postdated 1534 by the printer, William Rastell, More's own nephew, and so brought both author and printer under an imputation that it was intended as an answer to a "book of certain articles" which had been issued by the Council at Christmas.[1] Then came the attempt to connect him with the Nun of Kent's misdoings, and finally his committal to the Tower in April. And though, even in prison, while writing materials were allowed him, his pen was never idle, he found other subjects to occupy his mind than anonymous books on the sacrament.

He did, indeed, during his imprisonment, besides other works, including certain devout meditations and an elaborate treatise on the Passion of Christ, which he was obliged to leave unfinished, find time to write "a treatise to receive the blessed Body of our Lord, sacramentally and virtually both," which shows how much his mind dwelt upon this great subject. But the chief product of his pen in confinement was a work which he entitled with characteristic ingenuity, "A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation, made by an Hungarian in Latin, and translated out of Latin into French, and out of French into English. Now newly set forth, with many places restored and corrected by conference of sundry copies." These whimsicalities seem strangely out of place on the title-page of a work whose theme is comfort in tribulation, written by one who was himself patiently suffering unjust imprison-

Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation.

[1] *L. P.*, VII. 1, 149; More's *Works*, p. 1422.

ment, and certainly not without some apprehension of what might possibly be the end. But the reader wonders somewhat less at the fantastic additions to the title, and a good deal more at the contents of the little volume itself (scarcely a little one, indeed, divided, as it is, into three books, the shortest consisting of eighteen chapters and the longest of twenty-six) as soon as he begins to read. For More is not seeking comfort under his own tribulation; he writes as one who has surely found it himself, for of his own case he says nothing whatever. And the Dialogue really professes to be between two Hungarians, a nephew and uncle, the one seeking comfort and the other showing how to find it, in the miserable condition of a country overrun at intervals by the Turks, and not too zealously aided by any Christian princes. There is much, of course, behind the allegory, just as in the case of the *Utopia*, for the discourse goes at once into the large subject of tribulation generally, classifying it under different kinds, and proving that each kind has its own particular value and reward when patiently borne. "The form of dialogue," says Father Bridgett,[1] "as managed by More's skilful hand, lends itself to objections, explanations, digressions, amusing illustrations, which make this one of the most instructive and interesting books ever written 'to justify the ways of God to man.'" To describe its contents more fully is scarcely needful. The whole argument is scholastic and elaborate, leaving nothing that concerns the abstract question untouched. It begins with showing the inadequacy of pagan consolations to strengthen the mind in affliction, and it ends with encouragements to steadfastness in danger, with the assurance that Christian faith will yet triumph over the Turk and heal the divisions of Christendom.

[1] *Life of More*, p. 394.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER V

I have thought it desirable, both in order to assist in the study of Sir Thomas More's ideas, and also to enable the student the better to realise the old condition of things at a time when principles that were considered vital to Christianity came to be assailed with unwonted vehemence, to give here a complete abstract of the whole substance of his first work in defence of the faith. I have abridged the matter as much as possible; but it is really so difficult to condense in some parts that I have made frequent extracts in quotation, occasionally availing myself of the author's own abstracts at the heads of the different chapters, where they seemed sufficient for the purpose. As my great object here is to put Sir Thomas More's own thoughts before the reader, I have cared little either to criticise or to defend them. But I think the careful student will admit that, though in some parts it may be difficult to accept his whole argument in the light of nearly four hundred years of further experience, there are other parts in which he is effectually confuting superstitions, at that time comparatively modern, which we have scarcely outgrown even in the present day.

Abstract of More's *Dialogue*

In the Prologue he says he finds the old saw true that one business begetteth another. A right worshipful friend had sent him a confidential messenger for his advice about some things which, though very certain in themselves, had of late been called in question by lewd people. He had at first thought it enough to tell the messenger his mind by mouth, but after the man had left, although he seemed trustworthy, yet their conversation was so long and intricate that he thought it better to put the matter in writing, especially as some parts required close attention, and if the messenger's report were at all biassed, it was well his master should know the truth. When he had written it all and sent it to his friend his mind was at rest for a time. But he soon learned that copies were made of his writings, and one copy carried beyond sea, where it occurred to him much mischief might be done if what he wrote were tampered with by the company of apostates there, "part run out of all religion and all run out of the right faith," who conspired to promote Luther's heresies. He was thus driven to this third business of publishing his book himself, after taking counsel with some who read it over in MS., not presuming to

publish matters that touch the faith without advice of men better learned than himself. For he doubted about two things especially; first, whether it was well to publish the messenger's arguments on the wrong side, sometimes couched in homely and even irreverent language; and second, touching some "tales and merry words" used both by the messenger and himself, which some might think "over light and wanton," though he saw no harm in them himself. The friends whom he consulted, however, could not agree: words which one man would have out two were for keeping in, with fair reasons alleged on both sides. So he struck out or changed as best advised, and let nothing stand except by the advice of the majority.

CHAP. I. then begins with the letter of credence for the messenger and the author's letter in reply to it (written afterwards and sent along with the book), which are quoted in full. In the former the writer refers to some recent conversations he had had with More, and says there was great speech and rumour in the country and doubts moved which partly touched the subjects of those conversations, and he had instructed the messenger to attend More's leisure for days and hours when he could spare the time, in order to get full satisfaction on those points. "For I assure you," he writes, "some folk here talk very strangely of the things that he shall move you," especially in consequence of "some letters lewdly written hither out of London by a priest or two whom they take here for honest." But he was confident that More would tell him the very truth, and he sent the man, not only because he could not come himself, but because he believed him to be trusty and "more than meanly learned," with a merry wit besides, for he was nothing tongue-tied. And trusting in More's goodness, he had commissioned him to discuss matters freely with him, yielding nothing to More's authority till he found it supported by reason.

More in his letter says he has no doubt the messenger had made a faithful report, but as his correspondent, doubtless, would have liked still better to hear everything from More's own mouth, he has put the matter in writing. And this he did all the more because his correspondent said he would take More's word for true against any rumours or letters written. And as some doubted not only about the charges made against "that man ye wrote of" (Bilney, as it appears elsewhere), but even against Luther himself, More had let him see not only the books of the one but the very Acts of the Court concerning the other, which he is also ready to show to any man who still doubts about the matter if he is able to understand Latin.

The *Dialogue* now opens with a discussion of the allegations that "the man ye write of" (Bilney) was unjustly accused and compelled to forswear heresies which he never held, and that he was thus persecuted for malice, partly of some friars against whose abuses he preached, and partly of some of the clergy, whose pomp

and pride and inordinate sins he boldly denounced. Men said also that it was for the same reason that they burned at Paul's Cross the New Testament lately translated into English by Master William Huchyn, otherwise called Tyndall, wishing to keep the people from all knowledge of Christ's Gospel and of God's law, except so much as the clergy themselves pleased now and then to impart; while the little they did give, it was feared, was "watered with false glosses" to maintain their authority. Indeed, it was suspected that the fear lest this should be discovered was the reason not only why Tyndall's Testament was burned, but why in former times a "Constitution provincial"[1] forbade any book of Scripture to be translated into English, and men who kept them were threatened with being burned as heretics. These were the growing murmurs which More's friend wished to know how to deal with; and the messenger he sent was so far in sympathy with them that he well knew how to put the case as strongly as possible against the authorities, so as to obtain from More a satisfactory answer. The Messenger, indeed, was a schoolmaster entrusted with the care of two sons of the gentleman who sent him to More; and Sir Thomas made it a first business to inquire of him what studies he himself pursued and in what learning he was most proficient. The Messenger replied that he had given most attention to Latin; other things he confessed that he cared little about. "For he told me merrily," writes Sir Thomas, "that Logic he reckoned but babbling, Music to serve for singers, Arithmetic meet for merchants, Geometry for masons, Astronomy good for no man. And as for Philosophy, the most vanity of all; and it and logic had lost all divinity with the subtleties of their questions and babbling of their dispicions,[2] building all upon reason, which rather giveth blindness than any light; for man, he said, hath no light but of Holy Scripture." This was really a little summary of Lollard philosophy, such as had been handed down from the first students of Wycliffe's Bible. The holy book was the only great teacher. Its authority was decisive; reason was altogether to be distrusted, and the subtleties of the Schoolmen had made darkness rather than light. A man governed by such theories, though by no means disposed as yet to question received doctrines of the Church, was ready to extend a large amount of sympathy to any notable person who became obnoxious to episcopal authority.

In CHAP. II. Sir Thomas replies to the allegations of unfairness to Bilney, whom, being then alive, he does not name but always speaks of simply as "the man ye write of." No wrong, he says, was done him, but even very great favour, unless a man convicted of heresy should have been put to no penance at all,—a

[1] Of Archbishop Arundel in 1409. See pp. 61, 62 *ante*.
[2] An old word for disputations.

point which he will discuss hereafter in the fourth part, "where we shall touch the general order that the Church taketh in the condemnation of heretics." The articles with which he was charged were that we should do no worship to images, nor pray to saints, nor go on pilgrimages; "which things," says Sir Thomas, "I suppose every good Christian man will agree to be heresies." The Messenger says he himself would admit them to be so, but he had heard of some who would not; and it would be as well to show why they were so, as some doubtless would say nay but for fear of burning their lips. That question More says he will not dispute, as he has no cunning in such matters; as a simple layman he only leans to the common faith of Christ's Church. He can only regard it as a heresy because it is a sect and a sideway from the common faith. As to the texts they alleged against images, he was sure St. Austin, St. Jerome, and others understood those texts as well as the heretics and had as good wits. They saw clearly that the words spoken in the old Law to the Jewish people, who were prone to idolatry—and yet not to all of them, for the priests had images of the Cherubim in the secret place of the Temple—did not forbid images among Christians, especially the image of Christ's blessed body hanging on the Cross, seeing that he vouchsafed to send King Abiagarus the image of His own face—the Holy Vernacle—"as a token to remain in honor among such as loved Him"; "which, as it was by the miracle of His blessed holy hand expressed and left in the sudary, so hath it been by like miracle in the thin corruptible cloth, kept and preserved uncorrupted this 1500 year fresh and well perceived, to the inward comfort, spiritual rejoicing, and great increase of fervor and devotion in the hearts of good Christian people." Christ also taught St. Luke "to counterfeit and express in a table the lovely visage of Our Blessed Lady his Mother. He taught St. Amphibalus, the master and teacher of the holy first martyr of England, St. Alban, to bear about and worship the Crucifix," and St. Alban was turned to Christianity at the sight of it, having seen it before in a vision. Is the name of Jesus to be held in honour? It is really only a word which, by writing or voice, represents the person of Our Saviour. What objection is there, then, to a figure carved or painted which represents Him more vividly?

As to "the cost done upon the Ark and the Temple and the priests' apparel by the commandment of God," the Messenger endeavours to answer More by a book called *The Image of Love*. But we need not trouble the reader with the flimsy arguments adduced, to which Sir Thomas replies at much greater length than one might have supposed necessary. The objections raised being demolished, the proof remains that the prohibition of images in the Old Testament was not complete, for in the Temple they had images of the Cherubim; but the thing prohibited was to make idols of false gods like

the Egyptians, as shown in the Psalm (xcvi. 5) *Quoniam omnes dii gentium dæmonia; Dominus autem cælos fecit.* What an argument to make no image of Christ because "all the gods of the Paynims be but devils"! Neither Scripture nor natural reason forbids us to do some reverence to an image, referring the honour to the person represented. When an ambassador receives honour, the honour is done not to him but to his king. "When a man at the receipt of his prince's letter putteth off his cap and kisseth it, doth he this reverence to the paper or to his prince?"

This interesting allusion to an old piece of etiquette is presently followed by an indignant reference to irreverent practices that were only too notorious:—

"And these heretics that be so sore against the images of God and his holy Saints would be yet right angry with him that would dishonestly handle an image made in remembrance of one of themselves, where the wretches forbear not villanously to handle or cast dirt in despite upon the Holy Crucifix, an image made in remembrance of our Saviour himself, and not only of His most blessed person but also of His most bitter Passion."

As to praying to saints, the heretics themselves knew that the Church did not worship them as God, but as God's servants, just as we often make great cheer to some men for their master's sake, to whom otherwise we might haply not bid once good-morrow.

CHAP. III.—The Messenger now, declaring beforehand that he was not stating his own opinion, but what he had heard and wished answered, says that though no good men would dishonour images, yet to go on pilgrimages or pray to them seemed idle, as they can do no more for us (if they can do anything) than Christ can do alone, and are not so much at hand to hear us, if they hear us at all, as Christ who is everywhere. And it seems "to smell of idolatry" to go on pilgrimage to this place or to that, as if "God and his Saints stood in this place and that place, bound to this post and that post, cut out and carved in images. For when we reckon ourselves to be better heard with our Lord in Kent than at Cambridge, at the North door of Paul's than at the South door, at one image of our Lady than at another, is it not an evident token and in manner a plain proof that we put our trust and confidence in the image itself, and not in God or our Lady, which is as good in the one place as in the other, and the one image no more like her than the other, nor cause why she should favor the one more than the other?" We put our trust in this place and that place "as necromancers put their trust in circles within which they think themselves sure against all the devils in hell, and ween if they were one inch without the Devil would pull them to pieces." And men think the clergy encourage this superstition for lucre to the peril of men's souls.

More asks the Messenger "if he minded ever to be a priest,"

and he answers, Nay verily, he thought there were priests too many already, and he hoped in good time to marry. "Well," said I, "then sith I am already married twice and therefore can never be a priest, and ye be so set in mind of marriage that ye never will be priest, we two be not the most meetly to ponder what might be said in this matter for the priest's part." But if the thing were as stated, More cannot see how the clergy for the gain they get thereby would suffer such abuse to continue. For if these things had never been practised, or were now undone, Christ's people would surely not "slack their good minds towards the ministers of His Church." These offerings are but a small part of the living of the clergy. "Let us consider our own country here, and we shall find of these pilgrimages for the most part in the hands of religious persons[1] or such poor parishes as bear no great rule in the Convocations. And besides this ye shall not find, I suppose, that any bishop in England hath the profit of one groat of any such offering within his diocese." So the continuance of the custom depends on those who make no profit by it, and who would never suffer it if they thought it wicked or superstitious. But bishops themselves visit these holy places with as large offerings and as great cost coming and going as other people do. Indeed, More believes this devotion so planted in people's minds that if the spiritualty were to leave it the temporalty would not suffer it; and if it depended only on the covetousness of evil priests, "then could not good priests and good bishops have used them theyr selves." As to the argument that "it smelleth of idolatry" to visit this or that place, St. Austin takes pilgrimages for a far more goodly thing, saying that "though the cause be not unknown why God doth in some places miracles and in some places none, yet is it no doubt but that He so doth." He sent two of his priests on pilgrimage for trial of the truth of a great matter "between them out of Hyppona in Affrike unto St. Stephen's Church in Milan, where many miracles were wont to be showed, to the end that God might there by some means cause the truth to be declared and made open by his power, which by no means known to man he could well find out." Pilgrims do nothing like necromancers, who put confidence "in the roundell and circle on the ground," with invocation of evil spirits in ways prohibited by God himself. What likeness hath that to the going of good men to holy places? "Which two things if ye would resemble together, so might ye blaspheme and have in derision all the devout rites and ceremonies of the Church, both in the divine services, as ensensing, hallowing of the fire, of the font, of the paschal lamb, and over that the exorcisms, benedictions, and holy strange gestures used in consecration or ministration of the blessed Sacrament; all which holy things, great part whereof was from

[1] "Religious persons" meant monks or friars in the language of the sixteenth century.

hand to hand left in the Church from the time of Christ's Apostles, and by them left unto us as it was by God taught unto them, men might now by that means foolishly misliken unto the superstitious demeanour and fond fashion of jugglery." No dog even is so mad but he knows a true coney from a coney carved and painted, and Christian people that have reason in their heads and faith in their souls do not mistake images of Our Lady for herself. And though every good Christian man has a remembrance of Christ's Passion in his mind, he is more moved by the sight of the holy Crucifix than when he lacketh it.

As to the allegation that going to this place and to that we seem to forget that God is everywhere, the same argument might be used against all the churches in Christendom; "for God was mighty in the stable as in the temple. . . . But this letteth not Heaven, be it a corporal thing or not, to be that place of a special manner and kind of his presence in which it liketh Him to show his glorious Majesty to his blessed heavenly company, which He showeth not to the damned wretches in Hell, yet is He never thence." So He went with his chosen people through the desert in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. "It liked Him also to choose the Ark that was carried with his people; at which Ark specially, by miracle He divers times declared his especial assistance, the Ark being translated from place to place." Was He not specially present also in His temple at Jerusalem till He suffered it to be destroyed for their sin? Instead of that one place of prayer He has now vouchsafed to spread Himself abroad in many temples. This remark suggests to the Messenger another in reply. The temple of Christ is, according to St. Paul, man's heart, and God is not confined to any place; as He Himself said to the woman of Samaria, "the very worshippers should worship in spirit and in truth, not in the hill or in Jerusalem or any other temple of stone." More agrees that no temple is so acceptable to God as that of man's heart, but God wills that His people should worship Him in company, and neighbours in one place. Christ told the woman of a time when they should neither worship in the hill of Gezera nor in Jerusalem either, but He did not say that they should never worship Him in any other temple. He only reproved all false worship and all worship done in any place with the belief that He could not be worshipped elsewhere. If churches were abolished "we were like to have few good temples of God in men's souls." The Apostles themselves, though they understood what was said to the woman of Samaria, were not content to pray secretly in their chamber, but resorted to the Temple, where they prayed in spirit and in truth, as shown in Luke's Gospel and the Acts.

CHAP. IV.—Hereupon the friend asked, what reason was there that God would set more by one place than by another. More says he could not tell why, any more than St. Austin could, but he was

sure of the fact. Not that God set more by one place for the soil and pavement, but that His pleasure was to be more specially sought in one place than another. Being asked why he was so sure of that, More says God had attested it "in divers pilgrimages by the working of more than a thousand miracles, one time and other." In John v., where we read of the angel troubling the water, "was it not a sufficient proof that God would they should come thither for their health, albeit no man can tell why He sent the angel rather thither, and there did his miracles than in another water?" When our Lord had wrought a miracle, "although He nothing do it for the place, but for the honor of that Saint whom He will have honored in that place, or for the faith that He findeth with some that prayeth in that place, or for the increase of faith which He findeth falling and decayed in that place . . . yet I think the affection is to be commended of men and women that with good devotion run thither, where they see or hear that Our Lord showeth a demonstration of His special assistance." Many Jews came to Jerusalem to see the miracle He had wrought upon Lazarus. And surely we were worse than Jews if we would be so negligent that where God worketh miracle we list not once go move our foot thitherward.

CHAP. V.—Here the Messenger raises the objection that if the argument rests on miracles they must first be proved to be true, as they may be fictions, and if actually done, the angel of darkness may transform himself into an angel of light; so how can we know that they were done by God? More says, the "force" of his tale was not the miracles but a thing "so plain and evident unto every Christian man that it needeth none other proof. And that thing is, as I said before, the faith of Christ's Church, by the common consent whereof these matters be decided and well known, that the worship of saints and images ben allowed, approbate and accustomed for good, Christian, and meritorious virtues, and the contrary opinion not only reproved by many holy doctors, but also condemned for heresies by sundry General Councils." It is true he thought the miracles wrought by God sufficient evidence though there were none other. But as the Messenger seems to impugn this—or suggests that others will impugn it—More will make answer. The Messenger again protests that he does not impugn it himself, but reports what he has heard others say, and More desires him by all means to put their case as strongly as possible.

CHAP. VI.—More then shows that it is a poor argument that men never saw miracles. They either do not inquire, or are unduly suspicious. If men held nothing proved but what they saw themselves, no man can be sure of his own father; the evidence rests only on one woman, who, though she can tell best, has greatest cause to lie if it be wrong. Nay, who can be sure of his own

mother, for he might have been changed in the cradle? But these examples, says the Messenger, "be nothing like the matter." How can one believe against reason and nature? The matter of miracles is impossible, and even if men take no profit by lying they may lie for their own pleasure. More says it would not be safe to set down as a lie everything that reason and nature seems to declare false. A man of India might deny that white men or women existed. The Messenger endeavours to show that the Indian could not allege reason and nature for his disbelief in white men. But More says he would have as good grounds as those who denied miracles. The credibility of witnesses must be taken into account. Who could have believed, if experience had not proved it, "that the whole earth hangeth in the air, and men walk foot against foot and ships sail bottom to bottom"—an idea scouted by Lactantius as impossible when philosophers affirmed it, but which is now proved by the experience of those who in less than two years have circumnavigated the world? "Who would ween it possible that glass were made of fern-roots?" No one who had not seen it done. "It is not more than fifty years since the first man, so far as men have heard, came to London, that ever parted the gilt from the silver into dust in a very fair water. In so far forth that when the finers of London heard first thereof they nothing wondered thereof, but laughed thereat as an impossible lie; in which persuasion if they had continued still they had yet at this day lacked all that cunning. Yet will I not say nay but that a man may be too light of belief."

Here More artfully goes on to tell the Messenger how "a good fellow" had made him believe that iron could not only be welded together when red hot, but that fire would make it "run as silver or lead doth and make it take a print." But his friend had gone on to tell him that "he had seen a piece of silver of two or three inches about and in length less than a foot drawn by man's hand through strait holes made in an iron till it was brought in thickness not half an inch about and in length drawn out I cannot tell how many yards." "Then," says More, "I wist well that he was merrily disposed." The other agrees that "it was high time to give him over when he came to that." "Well," says More, "what if I should tell you now that I had seen the same?" And he goes on to ask, "What if ten or twenty good honest men told you the same tale," adding that they had seen "that the piece of silver was overgilt and the same piece being still drawn through the hole, the gilt not rubbed off but still go forth in length with the silver, so that all the length of many yards was gilded of the gilding of the first piece not a foot long"? The Messenger says that if two men were to tell him that, they would not be so clever as the pilgrim's companion, who, when his fellow reported at York that he had seen a bird which covered all St. Paul's Churchyard with his wings, corroborated the lie by saying he himself had not seen the bird, but saw

in Paul's Churchyard an egg so large that ten men could scarcely move it with levers.

"Well, said I, then I have espied if ten should tell you so you would not believe them? No, quod he, not if twenty should. What if an hundred would, quod I, that seem good and credible? If they were, quod he, ten thousand they were not of credence with me when they should tell me that they saw the thing that myself knoweth by nature and reason impossible. For when I know it could not be done, I know well that they lie all, be they never so many that say they saw it done. Well, quod I, sith I see well ye would not in this point believe a whole town, ye have put me to silence that I dare not now be bold to tell you that I have seen it myself. But surely, if witnesses would have served me, I ween I might have brought you a great many good men that would say and swear too, that they have seen it themselves. But now shall I provide me to-morrow peradventure a couple of witnesses of whom I wot well that ye will mistrust neither. Who be they? quod he; for it were hard to find whom I could better trust than yourself, whom, whatsoever I have merrily said, I could not in good faith but believe in that you should tell me earnestly upon your own knowledge. But ye use, my master saith, to look so sadly when ye mean merrily that many times men doubt whether ye speak in sport when ye mean good earnest. In good faith, quod I, I mean good earnest now, and yet as well as ye dare trust me I shall, as I said, if ye will go with me, provide a couple of witnesses of whom ye will believe any one better than twain of me; for they be your near friends and ye have been better acquainted with them, and such as, I dare say for them, be not wont to lie. Who be they, quod he, I pray you? Marry, quod I, your own two eyen; for I shall, if you will, bring you where you shall see it, no further hence than even here in London. And as for iron and laten to be so drawn in length, ye shall see it done in twenty shops almost in one street."

After a little merry tale the Messenger admits that he must believe his eyes; but says that though the thing is strange it may be done. But a miracle is a thing that cannot be done. "I showed you this example," More replies, "to put you in mind that being over hard of belief of things that by reason and nature appear impossible, where they be reported by credible witnesses having no cause to lie, there is as much peril of error as where men be too light of credence. And this much have I proved you onward, that if ye believe no man in such things as may not be, then must it follow that ye ought to believe no man in many things that may be or may not be, if it seem to you that they may not be. And of truth ye cannot tell whether they may be or may not be except they be two such things as imply contradiction, as one self thing in one self part to be both white and black at once. For else many things

shall seem to you such as all reason will resist and nature will no wise admit, and yet they shall be done well enough, and be in some other place in common use and custom. But now, because all your shift standeth in this that of a miracle told you ye may with reason believe that all men lie, because reason and nature, being more to be believed than all they, telleth you that they say wrong, in that the thing reported for a miracle cannot be done, I have showed you that nature and reason doth show you that many things may not be done, which yet indeed be done, so far forth that when ye see them done ye may right well account them as miracles, for any thing that reason or nature can show you by what natural order and cause it could be done, but that ye shall still see reason stand quite against it, as in the drawing of the silver or iron."

CHAP. VII.—The Messenger still contends that things against nature are incredible. More meets him by the inquiry whether reason and nature show that there is a God or not. He replies that this is shown by faith, but whether reason and nature show it he doubts, as some philosophers have doubted it. More says there can be little doubt, for though the Gentiles worshipped a thousand false gods, "yet all that proveth that there was and is in all men's heads a secret consent of nature that God there is, or else they would have worshipped none at all." The fact that a few philosophers doubted goes for nothing against the opinion of the great majority who, "as St. Paul confesseth, found out by nature and reason that there was a God, either Maker or Governor, or both, of all this whole engine of the world." The Messenger agrees, since St. Paul asserts this, and More clenches the argument by saying, "If reason and nature show you that there is a God, doth not reason and nature show you also that He is Almighty and may do what He will?"

CHAP. VIII.—The Messenger, however, alleges that God will never do anything against the course of nature, which He Himself made so good that it could not be better, and He cannot make a change for the worse. More says, reason does not show this, for though all He has made is good, He has not made everything of sovereign perfection; "for then must every creature be equal," and all His work as perfect as Himself. "And of such infinite equal perfection was there by God brought forth nothing but only the two Persons of the Trinity, that is to wit, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Of which two the Son was first by the Father begotten, and after the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son—after, I say, in order of beginning but not in time—produced and brought forth. And in this high generation and production did the doers work both willingly and naturally, and after the utterest perfection of themself; which they did only therein, and in none other thing. And therefore God might break up the whole world if He would and make a better by and by, and not only change in

the natural course of this world some things for the better. Howbeit, God in working of miracles doth nothing against nature but special benefit above nature. And He doth not against you that doth another a good turn which ye be not able to do. And therefore, sith God may do what He will, being Almighty, and in doing of miracles He doth for the better, neither reason nor nature showeth you that they which say they saw such miracles do tell you a thing that cannot be done, sith ye have no reason to prove that God either cannot do it or will not do it. For sith He can do it, and it may be that He will do it, why should we distrust good and honest men that say they saw Him do it?"

CHAP. IX.—The Messenger, however, says he is not bound to believe any miracles, because he never spoke with any man who could assert that he saw one. Perhaps, More suggests, no one alive could now testify to him that he was baptized or "bishoped." Why then should he not doubt if he had been? He can only presume that he was because it is so common; and though miracles are not so commonly done, "yet hath there ever from the beginning of the world in every nation, Christian or heathen, and almost every town at sundry times, so many miracles and marvels been wrought beside the common course of nature, that I think through the world it is as well believed universally that miracles and marvels there be, as anything is believed that men look upon. So that, if common presumption serve you ye may, as I said, as well believe that miracles be done as that yourself was ever christened." Even the doctors of Christ's Church did not deny pagan miracles, but attributed them to the Devil through God's sufferance "for the illusion of them that with idolatry had deserved to be deluded." Moreover, if his friend be a Christian man and receive the Scriptures, More tells him, "I might in this matter have choked you long ago with the manifold miracles and marvels that be showed there."

CHAP. X.—The Messenger then says he does not doubt that God works miracles, but he does not trust common fame about such events even in connection with pilgrimages "begun by some silly woman seeking St. Sythe when she seghyth (sigheth?) for miscasting of her keys." What amount of testimony is requisite? More answers after a fashion of his own by telling a story of a marriage at St. Stephen's, Walbrook. Little as the place was renowned for miracles, there came of this marriage a boy not a foot long. "And I am sure," says More, "he is grown now an inch longer than I." "How long is it ago?" asks the other. "About twenty-one years," is the answer. "Tush, quod he, this is a worthy miracle." "In good faith," says More, "never wist I that any man could tell that he had any other beginning." But he considered this quite as great a miracle as the raising of a dead man. It was only familiarity with the fact that took away the wonder of it, just as the ebbing and flowing of the tide excited no wonder because we

daily saw it. But whoever had never seen or heard of it "would at the first sight wonder sore thereat to see that great water come wallowing up against the wind, keeping a common course to and fro, no cause perceived that driveth him." If dead men were as commonly revived by miracle as men are brought forth by nature, it would be thought a less marvel than growth from a little seed. If you had never seen a gun, would you have thought it more marvellous that a man should be carried a mile "in a paternoster while," or that a stone more than a man's weight should be carried more than a mile in as short a time? "Surely, quod he, both twain were very strong; but yet I could not choose but think it were rather true that God did the one than that any craft of man could do the other." Well, but, says More, "if it were showed you that St. Erkenwald, or his sister, drew out a piece of timber that was cut too short, for the roof in making Barking Abbey, should this be so incredible to you to believe that they drew in length a piece of wood by the power and help of God's hand, when we see daily a great piece of silver, brass, laten, or iron, draw at length into small wire as wonderfully by man's hand?"

In CHAP. XI. "the author shows that a miracle is not to be mistrusted though it be done in a small matter and seemeth upon a slight occasion."

CHAP. XII.—As to testimony More thinks little would be required by those who believe in the power and goodness of God. The number of records does not count so much as their weight. How many would the other require? If ten honest men from ten different parts, each with an offering at one pilgrimage—say at our Lady of Ipswich—affirmed with an oath a miracle done upon himself, would he not believe that at least two spoke the truth? The other disputes this, as each would be but a single witness to a single miracle. Very well, suppose "another case, that ten young women, not very specially known for good but taken out at a venture, dwelling all in one town, would report that a friar of good fame, hearing their confessions at a pardon, would have given them all in a penance to let him lie with them, on your faith would ye not believe that among so many some of them said true? Yes, that I would, quod he, by the Marymass believe they said true all ten, and durst well swear for them and they were but two. Why so? quod I. They be as single witnesses as the other of whom I told you before. For none of them can tell what was said to another, and yet they be unsworn also, and therewith they be but women, which be more light and less to be regarded, dwelling all in one town also, and thereby might they the more easily conspire a false tale. They be, quod he, witnesses good enough for such a matter, the thing is so likely of itself that a freer will be womanish, look the holy horeson never so saintly. Ye deny not, quod I, that God may as easily do a good turn by a miracle as any man may do an

evil by nature. That is true, quod he, and He list. Well, quod I, see now what a good way ye be in, that are, of your own good godly mind, more ready to believe two simple women that a man will do nought than ten or twenty men that God will do good."

CHAP. XIII.—More continues:—"But sith that this kind of proof will not suffice you, I daresay, if ye would seek and inquire, ye should many done in your days in the presence of much people. Where should I see that? quod he. Ye might, quod I, upon Good Friday every year this two hundred year, till within this five year that the Turks have taken the town, have seen one of the thorns that was in Christ's crown bud and bring forth flowers in the service time, if ye would have gone to the Rodes. So far? quod he. Nay then, yet had I liever to have God's blessing to believe that I see not than go so far therefor. I am well appaied, quod I, thereof, for if ye had liever believe than take the pain of a long pilgrimage, ye will never be so stiff in any opinion, that ye will put yourself in jeopardy for pertynacy and stubborn standing by your part."

But the Messenger objects that even if he had taken the journey thither he might have been deceived in a miracle done before a multitude.

CHAP. XIV.—For example, a priest wishing to attract a pilgrimage into his parish could get a rogue pretending to seek a saint in his church to profess that he had suddenly acquired the power of sight. "Then shall ye have the bells rung for a miracle, and the fond folk of the country soon made fools. Then women coming thither with their candles; and the parson, buying of some lame beggar three or four pair of old crutches with twelve pence spent in men and women of wax thrust through divers places, some with arrows and some with rusty knives, will make his offerings for one seven years worth twice his tithes." More admits that this is not only possible but sometimes actually takes place, giving in illustration an anecdote that More had been told by his father of a beggar in Henry VI.'s days, who came with his wife to St. Albans and walked about the town begging five or six days before the King came thither, "saying that he was born blind and never saw in his life, and was warned in a dream that he should come out of Berwick, where he said he had ever dwelled, to seek St. Alban, and that he had been at his shrine and had not been holpen. And therewith he would go seek him at some other place, for he had heard some say since he came that St. Alban's body should be at Cologne. And indeed such a contention hath there been; but of truth, as I am surely informed, he lieth here at St. Alban's, saving some relics of him which they there show shrined. But to tell you forth, when the King was comen and the town full, suddenly this blind man at St. Alban's shrine had his sight again, and a miracle solemnly rongen and *Te Deum* songen; so that nothing was talked

of in all the town but this miracle. So happened it then that Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, a great wise man and very well learned, having great joy to see such a miracle, called the poor man unto him. And first, showing himself joyous of God's glory so showed in the getting of his sight, and exhorting him to meekness, and to none ascribing of any part the worship to himself, nor to be proud of the people's praise, which would call him a good and godly man thereby—at last he looked well upon his eyen and asked whether he could never see nothing at all in all his life before. And when as well his wife as himself affirmed fastly no, then he looked advisedly upon his eyen again, and said: I believe you very well, for methinketh that you cannot see well yet. Yes, sir, quod he, I thank God and his holy martyr, I can see now as well as any man. Ye can, quod the Duke; what colour is my gown? Then anon the beggar told him. What colour, quod he, is this man's gown? He told him also; and so forth without any sticking he told him the names of all the colours that could be shown him. And when my lord saw that, he bade him Walk, faytoure![1] and made him be set openly in the stocks. For though he could have seen suddenly by miracle the difference between different colours, yet could he not by the light so suddenly tell the names of all these colours but if he had known them before, no more than the names of all the men that he should suddenly see."

[We pause to note that this story is reproduced by Shakespeare (*King Henry VI.*, Part II. Act iv. Scene 1) with the utmost exactitude. The vagrant comes from Berwick and is at St. Albans with his wife, is questioned by the Duke about colours, and exposed in the same way; only a further imposture is added of pretended lameness which is cured by the whip. This addition was perhaps founded on another case preserved by tradition which Duke Humphrey may also have exposed,[2] and the dramatist found it convenient to combine the two in one person.]

The Messenger follows up this tale with the story of another imposture still more scandalous which was perpetrated at Leominster "in that King's father's days," *i.e.* in Henry V.'s time, the memory of which for its grossness had been kept alive ever since. The prior had "brought privily a strange wench into the Church, that said she was sent thither by God and would not lie out of the church. And, after, she was grated within iron grates above in the rood loft, where it was believed she lived without meat or drink only by angels' food. And divers times she was houseled in

[1] "Faitour," according to Halliwell, means "an idle lazy fellow," "a deceiver," or "a vagrant."

[2] A pretended cure of lameness at St. Albans was actually exposed in the case of a girl nearly a century later. See Cranmer's *Remains* (Parker Soc.), p. 65.

sight of the people with an host unconsecrate, and, all the people looking upon, there was a device with a small hair that conveyed the host from the paten of the chalice out of the prior's hands into her mouth, as though it came alone; so that all the people, not of the town only, but also of the country about, took her for a very quick saint, and daily sought so thick to see her that many that could not come near to her cried out aloud, 'Holy maiden, Elizabeth, help me!' and were fain to throw their offering over their fellows' heads for prease. Now lay the Prior with Holy Maiden Elizabeth nightly in the rood-loft till she was after taken out and tried in the keeping of my lady the King's mother.[1] And by the longing for meat, with voidance of that she had eaten (which had no saintly savour), she was perceived for no saint and confessed all the matter." More declares that she and the prior ought to have been burned at one stake. But he rejects an inference suggested by the Messenger that such stories destroy the credit of miracles, as they are only examples of imposture on one side and great folly on the other in believing suspicious things without inquiry. God always brings impostures to light, as he did at "Berna a great city in Almaigne." The Messenger says, No, there must be many that never come to light. "Ye cannot very well warrant it," says More, and reminding him how God brought to light the pretended miracles of the priests of Bel, asks how he can be sure that there are many false which he does not know to be false. The Messenger, however, would turn the question the opposite way. He knows no miracles as certainly true, and doubts if any be so. More disputes this, and points out that there are miracles recorded in the Gospels, at least, which no Christian can deny. These the Messenger accepts, but pleads that they lend no credit to miracles "nowadays." More rejoins that miracles done at pilgrimages did not begin "nowadays" unless that expression includes a thousand or fourteen hundred years past, and if even but a few miracles were genuine, heretics should not "bark against the Church therein—much less when the testimony for ages has been so abundant. Nor can he believe that Christ would suffer impostures to be frequent or the delusion to last long.

CHAP. XV.—But More goes on to say that even if some reputed miracles were known by the Messenger to be false, that was no ground for distrusting all. The other in reply relates an incident that occurred to him on a pilgrimage to Walsingham of a halting horse which found its legs on sight of a mare, and says that if he found a sanctimonious man "halt in hypocrisy" he should, while he lived, trust his fellows all the worse. More says he believes that in spite of his words he would act better, and even if he saw a white sapphire or beryll in a ring "so well counterfeit" that a

[1] His step-mother, Joan of Navarre, must be intended, if the King was Henry V.

jeweller might mistake it for a diamond, he would not doubt that there were true diamonds set in many other rings. "Nor will ye not," he adds, "mistrust St. Peter for Judas. Nor, though the Jews were many so naughty that they put Christ to death, yet ye be wiser, I wot well, than the gentlewoman was, which in talking once with my father, when she heard say that Our Lady was a Jew, first could not believe it, but said, 'What! ye mock I wis; I pray you tell truth.' And when it was so fully affirmed that she at last believed it, 'And was she a Jew?' quod she; 'So help me God and halidom, I shall love her the worse while I live.' I am sure ye will not so, nor mistrust all for some, neither men nor miracles."

In CHAP. XVI. "the author showeth that who so would inquire should soon find that at pilgrimages been daily many great and undoubted miracles wrought and well known. And specially he speaketh of the great and open miracle showed at our Lady of Ipswich of late upon the daughter of Sir Roger Wentworth, knight." This was a young lady of twelve, much tormented by the Devil, "her mind alienated and raving with despising and blasphemy of God and hatred of all hallowed things, with knowledge and perceiving of the hallowed from the unhallowed, all were she nothing warned thereof." Being moved to go on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Ipswich "she prophesied and told of many things done and said at the same time in other places, which were proved true, and many things said, lying in her trance, of such wisdom and learning that right cunning men highly marvelled to hear of so young an unlearned maiden, when herself wist not what she said, such things uttered and spoken, as well-learned men might have missed with a long study; and finally being brought and laid before the image of Our blessed Lady, was there, in the sight of many worshipful people, so grievously tormented, and in face, eyen, look, and countenance so grisly changed, with her mouth drawn aside and her eyen laid out upon her cheeks, that it was a terrible sight to behold. And after many marvellous things at the same time showed upon divers persons by the Devil through God's sufferance, as well all the remnant as the maiden herself in the presence of all the company restored to their good state, perfectly cured and suddenly. And in this matter no pretext of begging, no suspicion of feigning, no possibility of counterfeiting, no simpleness in the seers, her father and mother right honourable and rich, sore abashed to see such chances in their children, the witnesses great number, and many of great worship, wisdom, and good experience, the maid herself too young to feign, and the fashion itself too strange for any man to feign. And the end of the matter virtuous; the virgin so moved in her mind with the miracle that she forthwith, for ought her father could do, forsook the world and professed religion in a very good and godly company

at the Mynoresse, where she hath lived well and graciously ever since."[1]

CHAP. XVII.—But though More is quite convinced that he could prove this and probably other miracles besides done at pilgrimages, he would fain know of his visitor what distinction and difference he made between the miracles of old time and those now done at pilgrimages. He begs him, even as an advocate, to set forth all he has heard or all he thinks can be said on that point. The other says he has only disputed so far because he has known some "so far from the belief of any miracles at all that, in good faith, they put me half in doubt whether they believe that there were God at all if they durst for shame have said all that they seemed to think." But some might object that the Devil may work wonders by God's sufferance, which the people cannot discern from miracles; and how can we be sure that God does them? "Marry," said More, "ye told me that ye set naught by logic, but now ye play the logician outright." But the argument may be turned the other way. How can we be sure that the Devil does them, and "should we not rather believe that God doth them, which may do them better?" Far more reasonable to ascribe it to the master of all masters, unless we have cause to reckon that the work is not God's. The Visitor objects that the prohibition of graven images is cause enough. Like those of the Pagans, they have hands and cannot feel, feet and cannot go, mouths and cannot speak. So the words of God are clear against them, and such comments and glosses as More even now brought forth are idle.

[1] As regards this case it is right to quote what Cranmer wrote about it many years afterwards in his "Confutation of Unwritten Verities" (see Cranmer's *Remains*, p. 65, Parker Soc.):—"A strange thing it is to hear of the wonderful trances and visions of Mistress Anne Wentworth, of Suffolk, which told many people the secrets of their hearts, which they thought no man could have told but God only. She cut stomachers in pieces and made them whole again, and caused divers men that spake against her delusions to go stark mad. All which things were proved, and openly by her confessed, to be done by necromancy and the deceit of the devil." Cranmer, of course, writes unsympathetically, his object being in this part of his book to show up a collection of pious frauds. But the true nature of the case may still be a subject of speculation; for if she confessed imposture, it was certainly some time after More wrote. Possibly a confession was obtained from her when the house of the Minories was suppressed after More's death. But how far was the poor girl conscious of imposture? She believed that she had once been under the power of the Devil, and that she had recovered by miracle. In the very year of More's death and later the King's agents were busy inquiring into false miracles and spurious relics, with a view to make out as strong a case as possible for the suppression of the monasteries. It might not have been difficult to persuade a weak girl that things done upon herself, as she once believed, by benevolent powers had been due to opposite agencies. That occult influences were at work in the matter was Cranmer's own belief. Doubtless a natural explanation of the facts might have been obtained if they could have been fully investigated by the scientific methods in use in a later age.

And when Christ is our only Mediator why should we make our Lady or any other creature our advocate? None of them can be present at so many places at once; and if they were, they are no nearer us than God himself. To do them reverence is well, but in praying to them we do great injury both to Christ and God. For though, as More says, honours given to saints redoundeth to God, yet God cannot approve of giving them the same honour as to himself. The schools, he understands, devise a treble difference in worshipping, calling one kind *Dulya*, *i.e.* the reverence or worship man does to man, as the bondman to the lord, the second *Yperdulia* that a man does to a more excellent creature, as to angels or saints, and the third *Latria*, adoration due only to God. Under which head the worship of images should be classed the Visitor does not know, but if one kind be better than another the images have it; "for they have all that ever we can do." What do we to God when we worship him in *Latria* but we do the same to saints and images? Aye, even to pigs' bones sometimes. "For what honor is daily due to a reputed relic, to some old rotten bone that was haply sometime, as Chaucer saith, a bone of some holy Jew's sheep? See we not that some one Saint's head is shown in three places? And some one whole Saint's body lieth in divers countries if we believe the lies of the people. And in both places is the one body worshipped, where the one or the other is false, and one body mistaken for another, an evil man, haply, for a good. And yet will the priests of both places take offerings and toll men thither with miracles too." And how can More maintain that men worship neither the Saints nor the images as gods, but the images for the Saints and the Saints for God? The people pray to the Saints in their necessities, putting their trust in the Saints themselves. They also trust the images instead of the Saints. The people not only visit these places and do all the worship to Saints that they could to God (thus making the Saints God's fellows), but show the same fervent affection to images of stone or tree as either to Saint or God. They will even make comparisons between Our Lady of Ipswich and Our Lady of Walsingham, "as weening that one image more of power than the other; which they would never do but if instead of Our Lady they put their trust in the image self. And the people in speaking of our Lady, 'Of all our Ladies,' saith one, 'I love best our Lady of Walsingham!' 'And I,' saith the other, 'Our Lady of Ipswich.' In which words what meaneth she but her love and her affection to the stock that standeth in the chapel of Walsingham or Ipswich? What say you when the people speak of this fashion in their pains and perils, 'Help, holy Cross of Bradman? Help, our dear Lady of Walsingham!' Doth it not plainly appear that either they trust in the images in Christ's stead and our Lady's, letting Christ and our Lady go, or take, at the least wise, those images so that

they ween they were verily, the one Christ, the other our Lady herself?"

Then look at the results. Apart from the trickery used by priests and beggars in feigning false miracles, with what devotion do men come thither? Some have blind faith in these blind images. But most come for no devotion at all "but only for good company to bable thitherward and drink drunk there, and dance and reel homeward. And yet here is not all. For I tell you nothing now of many a naughty pack, many a fleck and his make that maketh their images meetings at these wholesome hallowes. And many that seemeth an honest housewife at home hath help of a bawd to bring her to mischief as she walketh abroad about her pilgrimages. I heard once, when I was a child, the good Scottish friar, Father Donolde, whom I reckon surely for a Saint if there be any in heaven. I heard him preach at Paul's Cross that our Lady was a Virgin, and yet at her pilgrimages be made many a foul meeting. And loud he cried out 'Ye men of London, gang on yourself with your wives to Willesden in the Devil's name, or else keep them at home with you with sorrow.'" The Messenger apologises for speaking so freely, but More willed him to forbear nothing but make out as strong a case as he could.

CHAP. XVIII. — More congratulates his visitor on having defended his case so well, though his arguments would prove too much, as he will show hereafter. But as it is now conceded that miracles do take place at these images and pilgrimages, either showed by God "for the comprobation of his pleasure therein," or wrought by the Devil "for our delusion and damnation," if it may appear that they are not done by the Devil they must be done by God, or if shown to be done by God, they are not the Devil's. More hopes to prove their value by one or other way, perhaps by both. But he first sets himself to show the importance of Church authority by the text "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Whatsoever therefore," etc., and further that, though people constantly fall away from virtue, faith cannot fail in the Church, for "if faith were gone, all were gone."

CHAP. XIX.—Then follows an argument "that if the worship of images were idolatry, then the Church believing it to be lawful and pleasant to God, were in a misbelief and a deadly error. And then were the faith failed in the Church, whereof Christ hath promised the contrary, as is proved in the chapter before." Moreover the wonderful works done at pilgrimages cannot be done by the Devil, as the Church cannot be deluded.

CHAP. XX.—The Messenger cannot see how to answer this, but thinks he has conceded too much. More allows him, if he think so, to go back upon his argument, and he suggests that perhaps God may "not keep alway faith in his Church to give the warning with when they do well and when the contrary." But He has

given them Scripture, in which they may sufficiently see what to believe and what to do; and this should be enough. If so, asks More, what of his promise, "I am with you all the days till the end of the world"? The Messenger says the words agree with his view, just as Abraham told the rich man in Hell, "They have Moses and the Prophets," meaning their books; and Christ himself said, *Scrutamini Scripturas*, etc., "Search you the Scriptures, for they bear witness of me." More replies that this is a strange interpretation of Christ's words, quite unlike that of the words of Abraham, "for Christ never left a book behind him of his own making, as Moses did and the Prophets"; and He said, "I am with you," not "I shall be." Nor did He mean "that of his Holy Scripture in writing there should never a jot be lost; of which some parts be already lost, more peradventure than we can tell of. And of that we have, the books in some part corrupted with miswriting. And yet the substance of those words that He meant bene knowen, where some part of the writing is unknown. He saith also that his Father and He should send the Holy Ghost, and also that He would come himself. Whereto all this if He meant no more but to leave the books behind them and go their way? Christ is also present among us bodily in the Holy Sacrament. And is He there present for nothing? The Holy Ghost taught many things, I think unwritten, and whereof some part was never comprised in the Scripture yet unto this day, as the article which no good Christian man will doubt of, that our Blessed Lady was a perpetual Virgin, as well after the birth of Christ as afore. Our Saviour also said unto his Apostles that when they should be accused and brought in judgment they should not need to care for answer; it should even then be put in their minds. And that He meant not only the remembrance of Holy Scripture, which before the Painim judges were but a cold and bare alleging, but such new words given them by God inspired in their hearts, so effectual and confirmed with miracles, that their adversaries, though they were angry thereat, yet should not be able to resist it. And thus with secret help and inspiration is Christ with his Church, and will be to the world's end, present and assistant, not only spoken of in writing."

CHAP. XXI.—More goes on to show that "if Christ continued in his Church none otherwise" than by leaving his Holy Scripture, and all the faith was comprehended therein, yet our salvation requires that He must give the Church understanding thereof. Then, further, the Church cannot err.

CHAP. XXII.—More comments on the danger of young men giving their study to Scripture exclusively, setting aside other learning, partly for sloth and partly for pride which will not endure discussion; while, covered with a pretence of Christian simplicity, they are led into strange opinions against the common faith, and finding "the old Holy Doctors" against them, despise

their authority. Then "sowing sedition, setting forth errors and heresies, and spicing their preaching with rebuking of priesthood and prelacy for the people's pleasure, they turn many a man to ruin and themselves also. And then the Devil deceiveth them in their blind affections. They take for good zeal to the people their malicious envy, and for a great virtue their ardent appetite to preach; wherein they have so great pride for the people's praise that preach, I ween, they would, though God would his own mouth command them to the contrary." It is notorious that some have gone on preaching after being forbidden by their bishops, insisting "that sith they had cunning to preach they were by God bounden to preach," and no one had a right to forbid them. One said men did not preach the Gospel well because they were not persecuted. One who held himself bound to preach was privately shown that his opinion was against the decree of a General Council and against Scripture also, on which he meekly acknowledged his error and offered to abjure it. But next day, facing the crowd and seeing many to whom he had preached, he was ashamed to retract, and maintained that his old opinion was true, and that he was deceived the day before in confessing it false. The books, however, were shown him again, "and himself read them before all the people"; on which he again yielded himself. "Such secret pride had our ghostly enemy conveyed into the heart of him, which I ensure seemed in all his other outward manner as meek a simple soul as a man should have seen in a summer's day. And some of them let not with lies and perjury to defend themselves, and some to stand in defence of their errors or false denying of their own deed, to their great peril of the fire if their judges were not more merciful than their malice deserveth. And all this done because (as themself doth at last confess) they think if they abjure they shall not be suffered to preach again. Such a scabbed itch of vain-glory catch they in their preaching that though all the world were the worse for it and their own life lie thereon, yet would they long to be pulpited. And this, I say, hath comen of some that have with contempt of all other learning given them to Scripture alone."

Being asked if he would condemn the study of a man so devoted to Scripture that he would give himself up to that and nothing else, More answers, "Nay. There was never thing written in this world that can in any wise be comparable with any part of Holy Scripture. And yet I think other liberal science a gift of God also, and not to be cast away, but worthy to wait as handmaids to give attendance upon divinity." But if a man has no opportunity for other studies, or in youth is so devoted to Scripture that he cannot apply his heart to anything else—"which affection, whoso happeth to have given him, is very fortunate if he with grace and meekness guide it well,"—More would counsel him "specially to study for the virtuous framing of his own affections and using great

moderation and temperance in the preaching to other men," fleeing especially the desire of praise and "show of cunning," in fear of the Devil's slights and inventions, whose highest triumph is to abuse what is best. To avoid this, special regard should be had to the writings of the Fathers. Yet first, besides abstinence and prayer and cleanness of living, he should be well instructed in all things that the Church believes; which being firmly grasped, "then shall reason and they be two good rules to examine and expowne all doubtful texts by, sith the reader shall be sure that no text is so to be understanden as it standeth against them both, or against any point of the Catholic faith of Christ's Church." If it seem to do so, either natural reason with collation of texts will bring out the truth, "or else (which is the surest way) he shall perceive the truth in the comments of the good holy Doctors of old, to whom God hath given the grace of understanding." Or, finally, if there still seem any text contrary to the Church's faith, "let him then, as St. Augustine sayeth, make himself very sure that there is some fault, either in the translator, or in the writer, or, nowadays, in the printer, or finally that, for some let or other, he understandeth it not aright." And so, let him acknowledge his ignorance and cleave to the faith of the Church as undoubted truth.

CHAP. XXIII.—The Messenger takes objection to this counsel, that the student should lean to Commentators and natural reason "which he calleth enemy to faith." More replies to him "specially proving that reason is servant to faith and not enemy, and must with faith and interpretation of Scripture needs be concurrent."

CHAP. XXIV.—The Messenger brings further objections, which More answers, against the advice to use the articles of faith as a rule by which to construe Scripture.

CHAP. XXV.—"The author taking occasion upon certain words of the Messenger, declares the pre-eminent necessity and profit of Holy Scripture; showing, nevertheless, that many things have been taught by God without writing, and many great things do remain yet unwritten of truths necessary to be believed. And that the new law of Christ is the law so written in the heart that it shall never out of his Church. And that the law there written by God is a right rule to interpret the words writ in His Holy Scripture. Which rule, with reason and the old interpreters, the author showeth to be the very sure way to wade with in the great stream of Holy Scripture."

The above is the author's own summary at the head of this chapter, which is a very long one. The first words are: "Why, then, quoth he, this were as much to say as that God had not well written his Holy Scripture, if He have caused it to be written so as men may be so soon deceived therein that they were as likely and (as it seemeth by you) more likely to fall into a false way than find out the true." In one part of the argument the author suggests

that the Apostles themselves may have spoken more plainly about many things than they wrote; and notes that Our Lord himself said to his disciples, "I have more to say to you, but ye be not able to bear it yet" (John xvi. 12). He also points out elsewhere from St. Paul's words that it is clear that that Apostle told the Corinthians by mouth, as our Lord had taught him, more things about the Sacrament than he put down in writing. "There was learned the manner and form of consecration. There was learned much of the mystical gestures and ceremonies used in the mass." How else could men have been bold enough to put water in the wine when the Scripture only speaks of wine turned into His Precious Blood? Luther, indeed, says we may either do it or not, as it is not commanded in Scripture. But that is the very foundation of his heresies, that a man is not bound to believe anything that cannot be proved from Scripture. "And he will call evident for him that text that is evident against him. And sometime, if it be too plain against him, then will he call it no Scripture, as he playeth with the pystle of St. James. And because the old holy Doctors be full and whole against him, he setteth them all at naught." Luther should condemn the Church of Christ for not sanctifying Saturday, which was the Sabbath instituted by God among the Jews. What authority in Scripture had the Church to make a change? Or how is it known that every man and woman has power to administer baptism? Then about the perpetual Virginity of our Lady; though More shows this is implied in the words of St. Luke, yet there is no express statement of the fact in Scripture.

CHAP. XXVI.—The Messenger saying that he would not believe the Church if he saw the Church say one thing and the Scripture another, More shows that the faith of the Church is the Word of God as well as the Scripture, and that in all doubtful matters the Church is to be believed.

CHAP. XXVII. shows that God has commanded us in all things necessary to salvation to give firm credence to the Church.

CHAP. XXVIII.—"The Messenger eftsoons objected against this, that we should believe the Church in anything where we find the words of Scripture seeming plainly to say the contrary, or believe the old doctors' interpretations in any necessary article where they seem to us to say contrary to the text, showing that we may perceive the Scripture as well as they might. And the answer of the author, proving the authority of the old interpreters and the infallible authority of the Church, in that God teacheth it every truth requisite to the necessity of man's salvation. Which he proveth by a deduction partly depending on natural reason."

CHAP. XXIX. proves by Scripture that God instructs the Church of Christ in every truth necessary for our salvation.

CHAP. XXX. shows that save for the Church's authority men could not know what Scripture to believe.

CHAP. XXXI.—"In that the Church cannot err in the choice of the true Scripture, the author proveth by the reason which the King's Highness in his noble and most famous book objecteth against Luther that the Church cannot err in the necessary understanding of Scripture. And finally the author in this Chapter doth briefly recapytle certain of the principal points that he before proved. And therewith endeth the first book."

In Book II. CHAP. I. an objection is started that heretics might say *they* were the true Church and, being so, infallible; also the fact that they were persecuted really went to prove it. This is answered by More thus: The Church of Christ, even when persecuted, came together to preaching and prayer and used the sacraments, as even pagan testimony showed. These people do not so. They preach, he said, among themselves privily, and the rest they do in the churches. "This, quod I, plainly proveth that they cannot be the Church of Christ, for the Church of Christ ever fled and forbare the temples in which idols and mammettes were; and it was a plain renaying of Christ's faith to do any observance thereto, though they did it only with their body for fear and thought the contrary with their heart. . . . But these men whom you call the Church come to the churches where the images be which they take for idols, and there they come to service with us whom they take for idolaters. And where they teach among themselves that we do nought, they come to our church, as I say, and in face of the world they do the same, kneel to images as we do, set up candles as we do, pray to Saints as we do, and haply more loud with their mouths while they mock them with their hearts. And over this, many mock also the sacraments which they receive. Moreover they could not be the Church, for the Church must always be of one belief, and must continue. But sects of heretics never continued, and even their books are lost though there was no law to burn them; yet new heretics now long after take their places."

CHAPTERS II. to VII. discuss similar objections, and CHAPTERS VIII. to XII. are devoted to questions about praying to Saints and worshipping them, canonisation, relics, worship of images, and doubts about miracles.

In Book III. the dialogue is resumed after a visit which the Schoolmaster has paid to his University, where some seemed to take sore to heart the treatment [Bilney] had met with, the burning of Tyndale's Testament, the forbidding of Luther's books to be read, and finally the burning of heretics, in which they thought the clergy uncharitable.

CHAP. II.—The saying was, not that the opinions imputed to [Bilney] were Catholic, but that he had never preached them. More says it is a waste of time to prove that he had done so; it

was notorious. And he goes on to show how mendacious and evasive the heretics were. As to [Bilney] he will not go about to reprove his living, as the question was about his teaching; and yet he will venture to tell what he had heard about him. [Here follows the passage quoted above at p. 399 of this volume.]

CHAPS. III., IV. are still about [Bilney]. More urges that the judgment of the court against him should not be lightly impugned. "Himself was well learned in the law, and could never say that he was denied any favor"; and so forth, to prove that he had full justice done to him. "This man had also been before that accused unto the greatest prelate in this realm [Wolsey], who for his tender favor borne to the university did not proceed far in the matter against him; but, accepting his denial with a corporal oath that he should from that time forth be no setter forth of heresies, but in his preachings and readings impugn them, dismissed him very benignly, and of his liberal bounty gave him also money for his costs. And yet was none of all these matters laid to his charge; which if they had been would peradventure have put him to peril. I was also myself since his abjuration present (as it happened) with an honorable prelate at such time as one that was an ancient heretic had been examined, and there had confessed that he had holden, taught, and in divers countries spread about, almost all the heresies that any lewd heretic holdeth. 'May ye tell his name?' quod he. 'Which of them?' quod I; for he had mo names than half a leaf can hold. 'Where dwelleth he?' quod your friend. 'Everywhere and nowhere,' quod I. 'For he walked about as an apostle of the Devil from shire to shire and town to town, thorough the realm, and had in every diocese a divers name; by reason whereof he did many years much harm or he could be found out. This heretic, touching all his other heresies he knowledged them in conclusion to be naught and offered to abjure them. But as for despising of images, relics, and pilgrimages, those things, he said, were none heresies but very good and true points; for he heard them preached, he said, of the great doctor, naming the man we speak of [Bilney], and told where; confessing, also, that he liked so well his sermons that he letted not to go twenty mile to hear him. And yet was there since that another heretic that confessed for his own part the like. So that ye may see that good Christian folk were offended at his preaching, and heretics liked his preaching and grounded their heresies upon his preaching."

Some facts are added about other heretics, one of whom confessed on examination that a sermon that he had secretly laid up was made mostly "by a man that was abjured, of whom we specially speak."

CHAP. V.—The conversation now turns on the way he was abjured, in which his friends procured a special and unprecedented form of abjuration to save his life. He forswore all heresies, admitting that he was lawfully convicted, but would not confess

the specialties; and though they were clearly proved against him, he denied having uttered things that he knew quite well that he had preached, and which he had before promised to justify. This More proves at considerable length, answering successively a number of strangely forced suggestions put forward to weaken the evidence. So the man was clearly perjured in his denial of the charges, as his judges must certainly have believed him to be; yet they received him to penance without confession of his fault. More will not say that in this they did wrong, but surely they showed him extraordinary favour, in the hope that God would send him more grace in time to come, as More prays that He will do.

CHAPS. VI., VII.—More now meets certain questions of casuistry arising out of the case, among which are some interesting remarks in Chap. VII. on the right (which the law would admit) of a priest cited as a witness before a judge to guard the secrets of the confessional by denial that he knows them.

CHAP. VIII.—More then justifies the burning of Tyndale's New Testament, which it was wrong to speak of as the New Testament, it was so corrupt and full of heresies. Being asked what faults were in it, he replied that to tell them all "were in a manner to rehearse you all the whole book." Above a thousand texts were found wrongly translated. To ask a sample would be like studying to find water in the sea; but More will give as examples frequently repeated the very important words "priests," "church," and "charity," for which Tyndale had substituted "seniors," "congregation," and "love." His object, of course, was to discredit the Sacrament of Orders, to reduce Christ's Church to a mere congregation, and to put Christian love or charity on a level with common love, for when he made his translation he was with Luther at Wittenberg, and was inspired by his ideas. He had also changed "grace" into "favour," "confession" into "knowledging," and "penance" into "repentance."

CHAP. IX.—Moreover, since Tyndale's translation was burned, another English book has appeared, professedly printed in Almain (Germany), a book in great part made in rhyme, railing against the clergy, in which it is said that Tyndale's New Testament was burned because it destroyed the mass. So the translation clearly suited the purpose of those who wished to destroy the mass. "But who made that second book? Forsooth, quod I, it appeareth not in the book. For the book is put forth nameless, and was in the beginning reckoned to be made by Tyndale. And whether it so were or not we be not yet very sure. Howbeit, sith that time Tyndale hath put out in his own name another book entitled *Mammona*, which book is a very *Mammona iniquitatis*, a very treasury and wellspring of wickedness. And yet hath he sithens put forth a worse also named *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, a book able to make a Christian Man that would believe it leave off all good Christian

virtues and lese the merit of Christendom. In the preface of his first book called *Mammona* he sayeth that one Frere Hierome[1] made the other book that we talk of; which Frere Hierome, giving up his Order of the Frere Observants came to him where he was, showing him that he would cast off his habit and leave his religion, and assay now to serve God, and that afterwards he left him and went unto Roy, which is, as I think ye know, another apostata, by whose counsel Tyndale saith that the Frere Hierome made the book; wherein Tyndale saith that he misliketh his rhymes and his overmuch railing, and saith also that he feareth lest Frere Hierome shall not well prove all that he promiseth in the book." As to the corrupt translations in Tyndale's Testament, More showed the Schoolmaster the book itself, which he had licence to keep for a while, with passages marked, which, after some little discussion, the Schoolmaster was obliged to admit, were indefensible and justified the prohibition of the book.

CHAP. X.—"The author showeth that the Translation of Tyndale was too bad to be mended."

CHAP. XI.—The Schoolmaster, however, blames the clergy because, though they were right in condemning Tyndale's Translation, they suffer no layman to have any translation at all, burning the book, and sometimes the goodman withal, by authority of a constitution provincial. "And this is a law very provincial, for it holdeth but here. For in all other countries of Christendom the people have the Scripture translated into their own tongue, and the clergy there findeth no such fault therein." He adds that the clergy among us are more vicious than the laity; "and as for learning they will teach us but seld, and that shall be but such things as pleaseth them, some glosses of their own making, nor suffer us to learn by our self, but by their Constitution pull Christ's gospel out of Christian people's hands, I cannot well see why, but lest we should see the truth." The Jews are allowed to read their law; why not we? More replies that he has brought forward two points—the Constitution and the vice of the clergy. In the latter point, in which he charges them not only with their own faults, but with those of the laity, of which he says they are the cause, More will "keep no schools" with him to discuss the subject. He insists that the English secular clergy are in learning and honest living well able to match, and even overmatch (though comparisons are odious), those of any "nation Christian." There are, of course, many

[1] Friar Jerome Barlow. He and Alexander Barclay, the translator of Brandt's *Ship of Fools*, are mentioned as apostate friars, formerly Observants, in a letter of Herman Rinck to Wolsey, dated from Cologne, 4th October 1528. See Arber's *The First Printed English New Testament*, p. 35. Barclay, it seems, had called Wolsey a tyrant and other opprobrious names (*L. P.*, IV. 5463); but he doubtless made his peace with the Cardinal and with the Church, and nine or ten years later was severely threatened by Cromwell for declining to put off his friar's habit, as we shall see hereafter.

very lewd (*i.e.* ignorant) and naught. If the Bishops would ordain better and fewer laymen, the matter were more than half amended. But we laymen look more on their vices than on our own, and so magnify them. The Schoolmaster brings in an anecdote of a young priest compelled to do penance amid the jeers of the crowd, to which More replies that it was right that such priests should be punished, but it was as much pity that people took a wretched delight in their sin and shame. "Undoubtedly if the clergy be naught we must needs beware, as I heard once Master Colet, the good dean of St. Paul's, preach. For he said that it can be none other but that we must ever be one degree under them. For surely, as he said, it can be no lie that our Saviour saith himself, which saith of them that they be the salt of the earth. And if the salt once appall, the word must needs wax unsavoury. And he saith that they be the light of the world. And then, if the light, saith he, be darked, how dark will then the darkness be, that is to wit, all the world beside, whereof he calleth the clergy only the light. Howbeit, though there be both among us and them many very naughte, whose faults be neither the faults of the temporalty nor of the spiritualty, but of those lewd persons themselves, yet are, I trust, neither their part nor ours come to that point, but that there may be many good men among us, and as for among them I wot ne'er whether I may say many moe or not, but surely, I think, many better."

CHAP. XII.—Yet if a priest be ever so wicked, and even impenitent, More says, though he do some way much harm, still, we have this advantage from his priesthood that the oblation of Christ's Body is nowise impaired by his sin, but is as helpful "to the upholding of this wretched world from the wrath of God as though it were offered by a better man." Yet he admits that there are now far too many priests; and he knows some of the bishops are of his mind, that there ought to be fewer. Once there were very few in a great city, and in a monastery of 500 inmates scarce four monks would be bold enough to become priests. Even the degree of a deacon was a great thing, and "when one of them went sometime in pilgrimage he would not be aknown of his Order because that he would not that folks should do him worship in the way. But nowadays, if he be deacon, and priest too, he shall need to feel no such pride, but rather rebuke and villany. Which though it have happened by the lack of virtue among them, and decay of devotion among us, yet hath much of all this gear grown by the means of so great a number of priests, and so familiar among us." There is more plenty of priests now than of good men. Now every rascal offers himself as qualified for the priesthood. The dignity of priesthood is above that of princes, yet they desire it for worldly ends, and "they reckon almost God much bounden to them that they vouchsafe to take it. . . . I would surely see such a way

therein that we should not have such a rabble that every mean man must have a priest in his house to wait upon his wife, which no man almost lacketh now, to the contempt of priesthood in as vile office as his horsekeeper. That is, quod he, truth indeed, and in worse too, for they keep hawks and dogs." More suggests in reply that "if the laws of the Church which Luther and Tyndale would have all broken, were all well observed and kept, this gear should not be thus, but the number of priests would be much minished and the remnant much the better. For it is by the laws of the Church provided, to the intent no priest should unto the slander of priesthood be driven to live in such lewd manner or worse, there should be none admitted into priesthood until he have a title of a sufficient yearly living, either of his own patrimony or otherwise. Nor at this day they be none otherwise accepted. Why, quod he, wherefore go there then so many of them abegging? Marry, quod I, for they delude the law and themselves also. For they never have grant of a living that may serve them in sight for that purpose but they secretly discharge it ere they have it, or else they could not get it. And thus the Bishop is blinded by the sight of the writing, and the priest goeth abegging for all his grant of a good living, and the law is deluded, and the Order is rebuked by the priest's begging and lewd living, which either is fain to walk at rouers [1] and live upon trentals [2] or worse, or else to serve in a secular man's house; which should not need if this gap were stopped. For ye should have priests few enough if the law were truly observed that none were made but he that were without collusion sure of a living already." The Messenger suggests that there might then be too few unless the prelates agreed only to ordain as livings fell void. This More thinks would not be a bad thing, "for so should they need no such titles at all, nor should need neither ronne at rouers nor live in laymen's houses, by reason whereof there groweth among no little corruption in the priests' manners by the conversation of lay people and company of women in their houses. Nay, by our Lady, quod he, I will not agree with you therein. For I think they cannot lightly meet with much worse company than themselves, and that they rather corrupt us than we them."

CHAP. XIII.—The Schoolmaster suggests that a married priesthood would be advisable, which, of course, Luther and his follower Tyndale advocate from the words of St. Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 2). Wonderful discovery, which never struck any of the "great cunning Fathers and holy Saints" all these 1500 years till God revealed it to Luther and Tyndale! "Lest that holy frere [Luther] should have lost his marriage of that holy nun, and Tyndale some good marriage that I think him toward." More explains that

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in Apostolic times they could make no priests (unless of young men who were not generally suitable), "except of such as either were or had been married," and "the Apostle, having in the choice of priests a special respect to chastity, and willing to go as near to no wife as might be," ordained as God had instructed him, that no one should be admitted to the priesthood who had ever had more than one wife. "He meant not, as mad Luther and Tyndale would now make the world so mad to believe, that a priest must needs have one. And everywhere in Christendom "bigamy of two wives, each after other, hath been a let and impediment of holy Orders," even when the one wife had been married and buried before the man's baptism. More goes on to suggest that Tyndale's mode of interpretation would imply not only that a bishop ought not to be without a wife, but that he should have one wife at least, and that the words did not forbid a plurality of wives. This argument he elaborates in a rather amusing manner, and further illustrates the sense of St. Paul by the parallel case of the widow (1 Tim. v. 9). The Schoolmaster admits that it is going too far to say that priests must have wives. "But me think," he says, "that this they might well say, and I too, that it is not well done to bind them with a law that they shall have none; but it may be well done to suffer them have wives that would, as they have in Wales.[1] And I hear say that in Almain they have great ease therein. For, like as here the good wife keepeth her husband from her maids, so there the parson's wife keepeth her husband from all the wives in the parish. As for Wales, quod I, ye be wrong informed, for wives have they not. But truth it is that incontinence is there in some place[s] little looked unto, whereof much harm groweth in the country. And as for Almain, such part thereof as that is used in, which is only where Luther's sect is received, whoso consider well what commodity is comen to them by such ungodly ways I think shall have no great fantasy to follow them." The Schoolmaster then suggests that "priests had wives of old when they were better than they be now, and yet have in Greece where they be better than they be here." More says he will not dispraise the priests of Greece, but something was not well there when God suffered all that Empire to fall into heathen men's hands. Yet their rule was not so loose; for though a wedded man taken into the clergy could not be separated from his wife, yet if unmarried when he took priesthood he professes perpetual continence. As to old times, More says "these married not so many" as the Schoolmaster perhaps imagined, and none after being ordained, and he further vindicates the law and practice of celibacy.

CHAP. XIV.—More now takes up the question of the "Constitu-

[1] Note this (with More's correction of the statement) and compare what Gascoigne says about the Welsh clergy and Bishop De la Bere, p. 263 *ante*. Church law was evidently not administered strictly in Wales, and both there and elsewhere priests' "wives" were talked about.

tion provincial" referred to in Chap. XI., and vindicates the clergy for having passed it, denying, however, that it forbade people "to have any Scripture translated into our tongue." Long before Wycliffe's day the Bible was translated into English by virtuous and well-learned men; but Wycliffe corrupted his translation to promote the heresies he favoured, while his Latin books conveyed into Bohemia caused the subversion of that whole realm by the teaching of John Husse and others. And Luther now begins to set up his errors again, adding others of his own. As it is a dangerous thing to translate Scripture, it being hard to keep the sense whole in doing so, a Council at Oxford forbade any one to translate it on his own authority or to use any of Wycliffe's books or others till the translations were approved by the diocesan or a Provincial Council.

CHAP. XV.—The Schoolmaster is thus driven to admit that the Constitution did not prohibit the having Bibles in English (More says that he had himself seen many which were authorised by bishops); but still, he says, the clergy will have no Bible in English, but burn them, and sometimes those that read them, and he refers to Hunne's case, who he says was "murdered," because he had an English Bible. More disproves this scandal, having been present at the investigation held by the Bishop after his death before the mayor and aldermen, when after the open reading of depositions he was proved clearly to have been a heretic. More adds other evidences to that effect, which came out afterwards. But at the investigation his English Bible and other books were shown, with passages marked in his own hand, which left no doubt of his abominable sentiments.

CHAP. XVI.—The Schoolmaster, however, still insists that the clergy keep the Bible out of laymen's hands for insufficient reasons, which More debates at great length, though he is inclined personally to favour the idea of a new translation, which he believes the King himself means to propose to "the prelates of the clergy."

In Book IV. CHAP. I. the conversation is resumed after dinner in an arbour in More's garden, when the Schoolmaster says that he finds many, not only in the country but also in the University where he had been, had no ill opinion of Luther, and thought his books were maliciously forbidden by the clergy that men might not understand his meaning. They disliked them, it was said, because they reflected on their own faults. This, More says, might be open to discussion if there was any doubt that Christ's Church had the true doctrine. But to ascertain whether our faith be true, why should we give a hearing, "not to an angel of Heaven, but to a fond frere, to an apostate, to an open incestuous lecher, a plain limb of the Devil, and a manifest messenger of Hell?" If you think these terms too strong, look at the language he uses in his own railing books against those whom it is his duty to reverence.

CHAP. II. gives an account of Luther's heresies, some of which are taken up and made worse by Tyndale in his book of *Obedience*, or rather disobedience; and discusses the worship of images.

CHAP. III. shows how Luther was led into heresy; and

CHAPTERS IV. to X. show his inconsistencies and the mischievous influence of his teaching.

CHAPTERS XI., XII. go to refute the pleas for a lenient judgment on the teaching of English Lutherans.

CHAP. XIII.—The author vindicates the burning of heretics, "and showeth also that the clergy doth not procure it, but only the good and politic provision of the temporalty." It was only a political necessity. "For in case the Turks, Saracens, and Paynims would suffer the faith of Christ to be peaceably preached among them, and that we Christian men should therefore suffer in likewise all their sects to be preached among us, and violence taken away by assent on both the sides, I nothing mistrust that the faith of Christ should much more increase than decay." But heretics among ourselves are not to be suffered. Nothing is gained for Christendom by communication with them. Yet they were never visited with temporal punishments till they became violent themselves. The Donatists robbed, beat, and killed true Christians till St. Austin exhorted Count Boniface and others to repress them, a course which St. Jerome approved. Since that time punishments have been devised for them, chiefly by fire, in Italy, Germany, Spain, and throughout Christendom; in England, especially since Lord Cobham's case, when King Henry V. and his nobles had to put harness on their backs to repress them, and a new Act was made for the punishment of those handed over to the secular arm. It is not the clergy who seek to punish them by death, for the spiritual law therein is piteous and charitable. At the first fault a man is abjured, does penance, and is received again into favour. But if he is taken in the same crime again he is excommunicated; and as his conversation would be perilous among Christian men, the Church refuses him, and the clergy leave him in the hands of temporal officers without desiring them to punish him. Yet even at his death if he give tokens of repentance he is absolved and received again.

CHAP. XIV.—But if the clergy hand over a heretic to the secular power, knowing that he will be burned, do they not, in fact, kill him? More will not raise the question whether a priest might not, under some circumstances, even order a man to be put to death. But as a matter of fact the bishop who condemns the heretic neither does it nor commands it. The bishop surely should not have such pity that rather than other men should punish the heretic's body he should be allowed to infect other men's souls! Some would say that a Christian had no right to punish the Turk if he invaded us (Luther thinks so); and such men, as a proof that God is displeased with battle being waged against the infidels, allege the diminution

of Christendom "since that guise began." This is like an old fool in Kent, who when once divers men of worship assembled old people to deliberate about the amendment of Sandwich haven, inquired what could have led to its being so blocked with sands that small vessels could hardly get in at divers tides where great ships had entered with ease a few years before. "Some laid the fault to Goodwin Sands, others to the lands inned by divers owners in the Isle of Thanet. Then started up one good old father, and said he knew the cause well enough, for he had marked it going on and getting worse. And what hath hurt it, good father? quod the gentlemen. By my faith, Masters, quod he, yonder same Tenterden Steeple and nothing else. . . . For by God I knew it a good haven till that steeple was builded; and, by the Mary mass, cha marked it well, it never throve since!" When Christians did their duty against infidels, God gave them great victories. Their ambitions and dissensions have caused the Turk to prosper. And though Christ forbade St. Peter, being a priest, to use the temporal sword to hinder his Passion, that is no reason why temporal princes should suffer their realms to be invaded by infidels. Self-defence and defence of another are not forbidden. So war in defence of one's country is justifiable, especially against infidels.

CHAP. XV.—"That princes be bounden to punish heretics, and that fair handling helpeth little with many of them," referring to some examples already given.

CHAP. XVI. discusses the amount of consideration due to those who have been misled by others into heresy.

CHAP. XVII.—"The author showeth that some which be Lutherans and seem to live holily, and therefore be believed and had in estimation, intend a further purpose than they pretend, which they will well show if once they may find their time."

"Will ye see ensample thereof? Look on Tyndale, that translated the New Testament; which was indeed (as ye said in the beginning), before his going over, taken for a man of sober and honest living, and looked and preached holily, saving that yet some time it savoured so shrewdly that he was once or twice examined thereof. But yet, because he glosed then his words with a better sense, and said and sware that he meant none harm, folk were glad to take all to the best. But yet ye see that though he dissembled himself to be a Lutheran or to bear any favor to his sect while he was here, yet as soon as he gat him hence he gat him to Luther straight. And whereas [he] in the translation of the New Testament covered and dissimulated himself as much as he could, yet when he perceived his cloaked heresies espied and destroyed, then showed he shortly himself in his own likeness, sending forth first his wicked book of *Mammona*, and after his malicious book of *Obedience*, in which books he showeth himself so puffed up with the poison of pride, malice, and envy that it is more than marvel that the skin can hold

together. For he hath not only sucked out the most poison that he could find through all Luther's books, or take of himself by mouth, and all that hath spit out in these books, but hath also in many things far passed his master, running forth so mad for malice that he fareth as though he heard not his own voice. He barketh against the Sacraments much more than Luther." Examples given in their different teaching about confession and purgatory. Tyndale shamelessly claims St. Jerome, St. Austin, and others as on his side, while Luther, finding them against him, rejects their authority altogether. Yet Tyndale began as an honest man, as some others haply do now, who in time, if they be suffered, will cast off their vizors of hypocrisy. If Luther had married a nun at the beginning, would not the people have burned him? Yet by degrees he has brought them to be content therewith. And we need not doubt that any heretics among ourselves who seem good will, if they be tolerated, follow Luther's example in lewd living. They only dissemble because their audience is not yet ready to bear the fashion of Switzerland, or Saxony, or some parts of Germany, "where they have already fordone the faith, pulled down the churches, polluted temples and spoiled all good religious folk, joined friars and nuns together in lechery, despited all Saints, blasphemed our Blessed Lady, cast down Christ's cross, thrown out the Blessed Sacrament, refused all good laws, abhorred all good governance, rebelled against all rulers, fallen to fight among themselves, and so many thousand slain that the land lieth in many places in manner desert and desolate, and finally—that most abominable is of all—of all their own ungracious deeds lay the fault in God, taking away the liberty of man's will, ascribing all our deeds to destiny, with all reward or punishment pursuing upon all our doings; whereby they take away all diligence and good endeavour to virtue, all withstanding and striving against vice, all care of Heaven, all fear of Hell," etc. All this would a few mischievous persons bring into the realm "if the prince and prelates and the good faithful people did not in the beginning meet with their malice."

CHAP. XVIII.—"The author showeth that in the condemnation of heretics the clergy might lawfully do much more sharply than they do, and that indeed the clergy doth now no more against heretics than the Apostle counselleth and the old holy Doctors did."

They do, indeed, no more than St. Paul counsels in Titus iii. 10. "But all the sore punishment of heretics, wherewith such folks as favor them would fain defame the clergy, is and hath been, for the great outrages and temporal harms that such heretics have been alway wont to do and seditious commotions that they be wont to make (besides the far passing spiritual hurts that they do to men's souls), devised and executed against them of necessity by good Christian princes and politic rulers of the temporalty, for as much as their wisdoms well perceived that the people should not fail to

fall into many sore and intolerable troubles if such seditious sects of heretics were not by grievous punishment repressed in the beginning, and the sparkle well quenched ere it were suffered to grow to over great a fire." The truth of this More further proves to the Schoolmaster's satisfaction by a reference to a book of decrees and to the writings of St. Cyprian, St. Austin, and other Fathers, and further to some works of Luther and Tyndale.

More, however, does not wonder that Luther and Tyndale are liked, for in every country there are many that be naught and self-willed, and a man might as well preach to a post as reason with them. They pretend to believe that no man is able to confute Luther and Tyndale, "where, methinketh, for these matters of their heresies that they so set forth (if the audience were indifferent) there were not in this world a man more meet to match them both twain in disputations than were mad Colyns alone, if he were not of the same sect. For he lasheth out Scripture in Bedlam as fast as they both in Almain; and, in good faith, they both expowne it as madly as he." Indeed, More considers that man as mad as any of the three, who seeing, on the one hand, how the faith of Christ has continued so many hundred years, witnessed to by so many glorious martyrs, confessors, and virgins, with worship of God and His saints, pilgrimages, and good works, and on the other how a new sect sets forth the very contrary, destroying Christ's holy Sacraments, pulling down His cross, blaspheming His saints, forbidding to pray for their fathers' souls, despising fasts and holy days, pulling down the churches, railing against the mass, and "villanously demeaning" the Sacrament, the sacred body of Christ—the man who notes on the one side the long catalogue of Fathers and virtuous divines from the days of the Apostles, and on the other such doctors of this new sect as "Frere Luther and his wife, Pomerane and his wife, Frere Huiskin and his wife, Priest Carlostadius and his wife, Dan Otho monk and his wife, Frere Lambert and his wife, frantic Colins and more frantic Tyndale, that saith all priests monks and freres must needs have wives:—that man were, I say, as frantic as they both that would rather send his soul with such a sort as these be than with all those holy Saints that ever since Christ's days have testified by their holy handwriting that they died in the same faith that the Church believeth yet and all this fifteen hundred year hath done, and shall do to the world's end."

The book closes with a reference to the final defeat of Antichrist and the gathering in of the remnant of the Jews and other sects under Christ Himself the Shepherd.

END OF VOL. I

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CHAP. XII.—"The author toucheth one special prerogative that we have by a priest, be he never so bad, in that his naughtiness cannot take from us the profit of his mass. Whereupon is by the Messenger moved a doubt whether it were better to have fewer priests and better, with fewer masses, or mo and worse, for to have the more masses. Whereunto the author answereth."

In the course of this argument the Messenger insinuates that there are now far too many priests. Once there were very few in a great city, and in a monastery of 500 inmates [rather a large number surely!] scarce four monks would be bold enough to become priests. Even the degree of a deacon was a great thing, and "when one of them went sometime in pilgrimage he would not be aknown of his Order because that he would not that folks should do him worship in the way. But nowadays, if he be deacon, and priest too, he shall need to feel no such pride, but rather rebuke and villany. Which though it have happened by the lack of virtue among them, and decay of devotion among us, yet hath much of all this gear grown by the means of so great a number of priests, and so familiar among us." There is more plenty of priests now than of good men. Now every rascal offers himself as qualified for the priesthood. The dignity of priesthood is above that of princes, yet they desire it for worldly ends, and "they reckon almost God much bounden to them that they vouchsafe to take it. . . . I would surely see such a way

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